

Volume • 1

**State and Nation in
the Context of Social Change**

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Social Change and Political Discourse in India
Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance

Volume • 1
**State and Nation in
the Context of Social Change**

Edited by
T.V. SATHYAMURTHY



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To the memory of
T C A SRINIVASAVARADAN

b. Tirupati 22 November 1923
d. New Delhi 22 November 1987

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T.V. SATHYAMURTHY

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Note

Throughout this volume the term 'State' (upper case 'S') is used to refer to the States of the Indian Union or Federation, and the term 'state' (lower case 's') to the Indian state, the power of which at any given time is controlled by the government at the Centre.

General Introduction

T V SATHYAMURTHY

Over the past fifteen years there has been a serious academic neglect of political processes and their ramifications for Indian society and the post-independence Indian state. These four volumes on 'Social Change and Political Discourse in India: Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance' are the first fruit of an international collaboration exploring diverse aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural change in India.¹

The aim of the present project is to strike out a new path and close the gap between empirical observation on the one hand, and theoretical analysis and understanding of dynamic political processes on the other. In setting out on such an expedition, we lay no claim to a grand general theory capable of explaining Indian political reality in all its aspects.

Even though the work presented in these volumes was shaped by the initial objectives of the project, its present form results from the interchange of views and perspectives between contributors who took part in the three conferences (Mysore 1989; Bhubaneswar 1990 and 1991). The central themes of the four volumes assumed their present

shape as a result of the opportunity provided by these occasions for an exchange of ideas. This work does not claim to have emerged from a sealed chamber of academic objectivity; rather, it has been shaped by the specific political conjunctures—domestic and international—in which its content and balance had to be determined.

The first volume explores the political dynamic of the state structures of contemporary India as products of the evolution from the colonial to the post-colonial era. The nationalist movement, under the leadership of the Congress party, viewed the process of state formation as an aspect of the political process underlying the forging of an Indian nation.

Having failed to prevent the partition of the country and inherited a truncated version of the 'Indian nation' envisaged in the independence movement, the leadership of the ruling Congress opted for a federal structure which inclined more towards centralization of power than towards decentralization of authority. The Constitution of India bore the marks of the Congress party's 'revisionist' orientation to the notion of federal structure. After showing some interest in establishing a state that would lie somewhere between a confederal and federal configuration of political forces, the Congress after Partition showed a distinct preference for a political system that lay somewhere between a federation and a unitary structure. During the past four decades, numerous political movements have arisen in various regions and among different strata of the population, representing a challenge to the dominance of the Indian state and its increasingly authoritarian rule.

The second volume is centrally concerned with analysing the Indian state's economic policies in the spheres of industry, technology, and agriculture. The overall picture that emerges from the volume is one of acutely uneven development, development skewed in favour of certain regions and specific classes at the expense of others. In the process, contradictions of a vertical nature (e.g. between dominant and dominated classes, upper castes and middle castes, upper and middle castes, on the one hand, and lower castes on the other etc.) have been woven into a complex web of interaction with horizontal (i.e. intra-ruling class) contradictions which have gathered momentum during the last quarter of a century.

The third volume addresses the problems faced by civil society as a whole, and especially by different segments of the mass of the Indian people in raising basic economic and political demands. The divided and fragmented character of Indian society calls for a multi-layered and diachronic analysis, building up from the micro- to the meso- and macro-levels, of the tensions engulfing the relations between its different segments and regions, on the one hand, and on the other,

the Indian state and the classes and groups controlling its power. The divisive role played by region, religion, caste, gender, and culture in the articulation of conflicting interests constitutes the main theme running through this largely empirically orientated volume.

The fourth volume attempts to bring together the larger themes of class formation and political transformation in India.

The theme of class formation is a difficult one to explore, especially in the context of social change involving numerous horizontally divided intra-class categories of deprived and oppressed people. Yet, political action from the grassroots points not only to the problems of different elements of society in a far-flung country, pursuing separate aims, but also to the potential contained in some mass movements for uniting in order to forge common demands on a widening scale. The phenomenon of political transformation is viewed from two angles—one of the actual cultural and social divisions that have come to the fore, and the other of potentialities contained in the present situation to overcome fragmentation and to struggle for common political and economic goals.

The division of this work into four volumes, each with its own distinctive subject, is not primarily intended to carve up the project into four discrete parts for two reasons. First, the project as a whole has steadily evolved through a number of discussions with a wide range of social scientists and political activists. The themes that emerged as a consequence of these interactions are sufficiently interconnected, varied, and complex to encompass a large variety of political processes and socio-political forces. Their examination and analysis from a number of different standpoints and perspectives constitutes the principal impetus for this work. The cohesiveness of the work as a whole is ensured by integrating it around a set of themes which weave in and out of the individual volumes.

The four volumes are thus presented as a coherent work which should be judged as a whole. The political discourse of those who control the power of the state and that of the mass of the population have diverged over the last five decades and have often stood in mutual contradiction. Social and economic changes have triggered off political movements against the increasingly unacceptable hegemony of the Indian state and its domination by the Congress party. The increasingly coercive character of the state structure has evoked popular resistance at a number of different levels in society, not all of which can be said to be progressive or democratic in their aims. The Emergency showed that even such a highly centralized and authoritarian state is vulnerable to pressures from a politicized and politically conscious civil society. The Indian state which inspired awe and fear in the minds of the people by its sheer fire-power and ruthless

exercise of authority during the first half of Indira Gandhi's rule became—during the latter half of the '70s—more and more susceptible to domestic and international pressures. Throughout the post-independence era, however, it has neither lost its essentially élitist class character nor given up its tendency to compromise democratic principles.

The background

The experience of the internal Emergency (1975–7) stimulated a new kind of activism in the form of political parties opposing the ruling Congress party. There were also numerous organizations concerned with a variety of social, economic, cultural, and environmental problems, raising demands of broadly two kinds. The first set relates to safeguarding elementary civil liberties and democratic rights (especially those guaranteed in the Indian Constitution) of the mass of the Indian people. The second set of demands was for greater participation of the people in the making and implementation of policies affecting their daily lives.

During the years leading up to the Emergency, the exercise of the coercive power of the state, through numerous civil–bureaucratic and police–para-military structures of government, both at the Centre and in the States, reached hitherto unprecedented levels of concentration and acquired a more and more monolithic character. The first phase of Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership (1966–75) was marked by strenuous attempts on the part of the ruling party to shore up its power by a variety of means, including the propagation of populist slogans; short-circuiting democratic processes in the society as a whole and within the Congress organization; remoulding the bureaucracy into a tool of the Congress high command. Attempts were made to pervert the judiciary politically, to undermine opposition parties; and to topple State governments; and to appoint and dismiss Congress Chief Ministers in utter disregard of elementary democratic conventions.

Underlying these developments, culminating in the massive 'derailment' of constitutional democracy in 1975, were complex interweaving political, social, and economic processes. They were taking place not only in a specific international setting but also within a domestic political economy that was fraught with internal contradictions. These contradictions affected the capitalist and producing classes in ways unexpected by the government.

During the period since the end of the Emergency, a number of tensions gathered momentum. The '80s witnessed a clash between the

tendency of the state to centralize power and militant opposition to it (especially in Punjab, Kashmir, and Assam) taking more and more violent forms. There was also an intensification of political contradictions and conflicts centred in the various nationalities and religions. At the same time, the efforts of successive governments to usher in an era of economic liberalization emphasized the worsening plight of the mass of the people in general and a fragmenting working class in particular. They also highlighted inter-segmental contradictions of a proliferating bourgeoisie in a context of rapidly deepening dependence of the Indian economy on international capital. Problems, deeply rooted in the past, were resurfacing in a rapidly changing domestic and international context.

The academic study of politics in India (as at 1975) was singularly ill-equipped for the task of unravelling the complexities underlying these phenomena. Its so-called mainstream (Morris-Jones, 1964; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967) was exclusively concerned with formal structures and the prescribed ways in which they were supposed to function; and social categories (mainly, but not only 'castes') derived from 'traditional' Indian society. It ignored the dynamic ways in which castes were becoming transformed and the crucial role played by existing and rapidly emerging new classes to which economic change had given rise. Nor has it shown an awareness of the refraction of classes into liminal categories (i.e. categories which straddle different orientations—e.g. class—caste; caste—region; region—religion), partaking of the characteristics of old and new patterns of social and economic organization. At the same time, mainstream Indian political scientists (with the notable exception of Kothari) found themselves encumbered with the conceptual and methodological strait-jackets in which Western political science in general, and comparative politics and development studies in particular, sought to squeeze the extremely varied, subtly nuanced, richly-textured and multi-layered empirical material which the Indian field offered.

The Indian scene in academic political science as at 1975 was still conditioned by the era of political stability under the Congress government. Kothari's (1970) energetic and distinguished early work, identifying the Congress system of power as the linchpin of Indian democracy, provided the necessary initial thrust to academic political science writing. However, the vast bulk of political scientists writing in India before 1975 were either poorly cloned versions of Kothari or insufficiently sophisticated disciples of the American school of political development. It is to Kothari's credit that he responded to the 1975–7 Emergency by radically altering his essentially structural–functional perspective and recasting his approach to Indian politics by centring it in discussions of the relationship between the state and democratic civil society (Sathyamurthy, 1991).

Moreover, a great premium was placed on theory derived from

highly restricted empiricist forays into the field of observation (e.g. Weiner, 1967; Morris-Jones and Dasgupta, 1975), whilst the task of drawing out the complex and qualitatively significant interactions embedded in empirically observed phenomena, extending far beyond the realm of quantitatively measurable characteristics, sadly remained neglected (with significant exceptions, e.g. Brass, 1965; more recently Kohli, 1990, and Srinivasavardan, 1992). By 1970, mainstream Indian political science had reached the stage at which it was finding out more and more about less and less (O'Brien, 1972; Sathyamurthy, 1971, 1973, 1986, 1987).

Among the most serious lacunae in the development of knowledge of Indian politics, according to the mainstream school, were

1. an understanding of the nature of the state;
2. the dynamic underlying class, caste, and other forms of politics and the interrelationship between these;
3. the interactions between the various—i.e. political, social, economic, ideological, cultural and international—vectors affecting change in post-independence Indian society; and
4. an insight into the factors underlying the tenacity and stubbornness shown by ordinary people in their continuous struggle against the persistent effort of the state to abridge, curtail, and even eliminate constitutionally guaranteed elementary civil liberties and democratic rights.

Yet, over the past fifteen years or so, we have witnessed an accumulation of a rich variety of political action, of differing range, depth, and coverage, originating in the grassroots. Even though not all of these struggles have been mounted on an all-India scale, such forms of political action have struck deep roots in the economy, ideology, and culture of the society (e.g. movements espousing the demands of peasants, farmers, women, Adivasis and Dalits). There is no book which provides a comprehensive and penetrating understanding of such political processes taking place in different parts of the country.

In contrast to mainstream or bourgeois social theory, Marxism offers analytic tools appropriate for an understanding of rates and degrees of change under the impact of dynamic forces. In carrying out the task of providing empirical substantiation of concrete phenomena, Marxist economists studying India have always taken 'economics' to mean 'political economy' in the strict interpenetrating sense of the term. Their studies generally follow up analyses of economic relationships with some indication of their political significance. This served as a good example for Marxist political scientists to follow in their own more centrally and explicitly politically orientated studies.

However, concentration on empirical study in this mode was handicapped by two related factors. First, there seems to have been some sort of unwritten understanding between the communist parties (i.e. practitioners of communist politics in a generally non- or anti-communist milieu) on the one hand, and Marxist intellectuals (with a few distinguished exceptions such as Kosambi and Randhir Singh), on the other. The communist parties were assumed to constitute the source of theory, whilst Marxist intellectuals were believed to be substantiators of theory (of which there was an abundance, authored by leading intellectuals in the CPI) with data collected in the course of fieldwork. Second, this derivative and flawed quality of the work of a number of Marxist political science academics in India had the twin effect of stifling a vigorous discourse between questions of theory and method, on the one hand, and empirical data, on the other. As a consequence, their work suffered from vulgar reductionism and 'formulaistic' jargonism and failed to generate new insights.

If the besetting sin of bourgeois (or mainstream) political science lay in its failure to recognize the ongoing dialectic between contradictory social and economic forces underlying political phenomena, the most debilitating shortcoming of Marxist political science arose out of its academic practitioners' general unwillingness to disentangle the dialectical method from the rigid orthodoxies of the different prevailing 'lines' within the fractured Indian communist movement (Sathyamurthy, 1986; Wilson in Volume 1 of this series).

As an academic discipline, political science has suffered greatly, caught, as it has been, between the Scylla of international compulsions (i.e. compulsions emanating from the West in general and America in particular) leading to the adoption of a positivist-functional socio-logical paradigm (of which Bêteille, 1965; Bailey, 1960; and Hanson, 1969 are outstanding examples), and the Charybdis of domestic compulsions of mechanically adhering to party orthodoxies and 'lines' arising out of too close an identification with the communist movement.

In attempting to strike out a new path, we have approached our tasks from two broad angles. The first involves focusing attention on the richness and diversity of the language used to refer to political processes, political action and aims by different actors involved in day-to-day affairs involving institutional structures of the society and the state. Starting with the semantic and semiotic dimensions of the terms of political discourse generated through the concrete experience of people, the research strategy quickly moved to substantive areas of material significance. As the project progressed, the analytic emphasis shifted to the evolution of the continuing relationship between changing terms of political discourse, on the one hand, and, on the

other, the changing agenda of politics in the concrete. Thus, even from its very early stages, the project became involved in historical analysis and the examination of concrete social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological processes. The task facing the contributors was one of establishing links between the terms of political discourse and the dynamic of the political processes involved in social change, and of interweaving the two.

The second and equally important angle from which the project views its remit is concerned with a balance between the essentially *political* dimension of what is studied and the economic, social, cultural, ideological, and international underpinnings of politics. This balance has been secured by following an uncompromisingly interdisciplinary approach to the political questions that are selected for study. Whilst it is indeed a difficult balance to achieve in practice on a sustained basis, even a modest degree of success in such an endeavour can only result in an enhancement of the intellectual 'toughness' of political study and the analytical value of the conclusions reached. This project represents a serious attempt at providing a single coherent account of the Indian polity as a whole, and systematically analysing its evolution and principal tendencies.

From the outset we recognized that in order to realize this aim, not only must the project involve economists, sociologists, historians, and students of politics, but also political activists. The four volumes of this project address not only the question of how India's concrete experience of politics has contributed to enriching our understanding of theoretical concepts and to layering political vocabulary (according to its nuances), but also the central questions arising out of political practice in India.

Political concepts and terms of discourse

The various concepts involved in understanding the dynamic underlying change and continuity in Indian political life embrace diverse spheres of thought and action. Some concepts refer to political processes (e.g. elections, party politics, institutionalization of 'corruption', and the changing modalities of Centre-State relations). On a somewhat different level, there are concepts that address ideological developments—e.g. the various 'isms' of politics, the political economy of 'liberalization' policies, and the emergence of new mass-based constituencies in politics with special reference to, for example, community-based or environmentally-orientated issues.

A third category of concepts and terms refers to institutional features of politics (e.g. resource allocation mechanisms, and the

relationship between trade unions, government, and employers). At yet another level, we encounter concepts which carry a constitutional import (e.g. the role of the state in maintaining national security and integrity; the relationship between the executive, legislature, and the judiciary; the role of the armed forces; and the elaboration of para-military police forces in the name of maintaining security). A whole gamut of concepts, analytically separable along several different theoretically identified spectral bands for purposes of discussion, overlap in actual practice, and this gives rise to explanatory complications which must be taken into account in clarifying our ideas of Indian politics.

The dynamic of complex political processes has been captured over the years through expressive phrases or terms imaginatively conceived by those active in politics as well as those who write about it. These have passed in and out of media parlance and informed discussion without any systematic attempt to assess their overall significance in a broader context or, for that matter, the different levels of significance that they acquire under different concrete conditions. Thus, for example, terms such as secularism, nationalism, communalism, regionalism, liberalism, revolution, liberation, and 'value-based' politics are commonly used. Yet, on the other hand, the application of these terms to specific circumstances² reveals the ambiguities and contradictions to which they are prone in ordinary use.

At the same time, a large number of economic and sociological terms are used to describe aspects of the political process which pertain to the subterranean reaches of politics rather than strictly to the sphere of formal institutional mechanisms.³ These represent but a thin cross-section of the enormous range of concepts of differing vitality and import that have arisen in discussions of Indian politics.

Method of approach

In the process of defining the tasks facing the project, a number of methodological points have been addressed. Among these, five are of

² For example, 'communalism' in Punjab where a discussion of say *khalsa* or *quaum* has gained political relevance in recent years, as indeed the term Dravidistan (or, latterly Eelam) which has undergone a transformation of meaning during the past several decades.

³ For example, *dadal*, *mamul*, and Permit-Quota-License Raj in discussions of corruption; loan *melas* in discussions of partisan favours in the economic sphere; and *chacha*, *dala*, *mastaan*, *Aaya Ram Gaya Ram*, and *Garibi Hatao* in discussions concerning the manipulation of political and economic processes.

crucial importance: the need to spell out the project's interdisciplinary character clearly; the need for social scientists from disciplines other than politics to focus on the political implications of their work; the cultural dimension of political change; the need to link the two levels of analysis relating to the 'terms of political discourse' and the 'substance of political action'; and, the need to link the qualitative and quantitative aspects of political change.

1. Interdisciplinary nature (vide Figure 0.1) of the task of analysing political change

The interdisciplinary nature of the task of analysing political change needs to be spelled out clearly. Over the decades, the institutional structures of the state have been substantially drawn into the development of the economy and into ensuring the stability and order that are necessary to accomplish the government's stated as well as hidden goals. These structures have a specific origin in constitutional arrangements that preceded and followed Independence. The fact that state structures are (directly or implicitly) rooted in the Constitution alongside a number of socio-economic and political values and civil rights, introduces a dynamic which has worked itself out in numerous predictable and unpredictable ways, but which almost invariably can be specified and interpreted. The different bodies involved in the interpretation of the Constitution (from the Supreme Court downwards, and including such important structures as the Finance Commission)—against a backdrop of conflicts of interest and changing power equations in the rural and urban social economy, as well as the central and regional political formations competing for power—have contributed to shifts in the overall political direction of the system as a whole.

The theoretical and substantive importance assumed by issues raised outside the milieu constituted by institutional structures, during the past fifteen years, has compelled some social scientists (e.g. Kothari, 1983, 1988) to increase the attention paid to popular movements (more specifically, movements of resistance to state power). The struggles which they wage do not originate in recognized institutions. Nor are recognized institutions of state power or political parties able to co-opt or absorb them. In fact, such popular movements often develop a dynamic of their own that needs to be located within the political arena in their specific relationships.

We are thus involved in a task that has to embrace a dual aim. We must trace the quintessentially *political* evolution of the Constitution, on the one hand, and, on the other, the *political* evolution of the society as a whole (of which the structures provided by and ideas

Figure 0.1

A Conceptual Guide to the four volumes

<i>Level of Analysis</i>	<i>Social Science Disciplines</i>	<i>Themes and Concepts explored</i>	<i>Volume No.: Chapter No.</i>
1. Constitutional and Institutional	Politics; History; Sociology; Law	state structures (electoral, judicial, bureaucratic); independence and nationalism; patriarchy; secularism; civil, fundamental and democratic rights; equality; social justice; dependence	1:2; 1:6; 1:3; 1:4; 1:5; 3:3; 3:4; 3:6; 3:7; 3:8; 3:9; 3:10; 3:11; 3:12; 3:13; 3:15; 3:17; 4:1; 4:3; 4:4; 4:5; 4:6; 4:8; 4:11; 4:13; 4:14; 4:15; 4:16
2. Socio-economic and related questions	Economics; Economic History; Social Policy	economic development; planning; technological policy; balance and terms of trade between industry and agriculture; equality of access to education, health and social services; political dissent, dissidence and contradiction; positive discrimination; inter-regional differences	2:1; 2:2; 2:3; 2:4; 2:5; 2:6; 2:7; 2:8; 2:9; 2:10; 2:11; 3:1; 3:2; 4:1; 4:2; 4:3; 4:4; 4:5; 4:6; 4:9; 4:10; 4:12; 4:13; 4:16
3. Extra-constitutional avenues of change	Social and Political Anthropology; Politics; Sociology; Social Psychology	movements outside the purview of the Constitution; movements to empower the poor; movements to mobilize lower and lowest castes, Adivasis and Dalits; women's movement and women's organizations; and other activist movements.	3:1; 3:2; 3:3; 3:5; 3:6; 3:10; 3:11; 3:12; 3:13; 3:14; 3:15; 3:17; 4:1; 4:2; 4:5; 4:7; 4:8; 4:12; 4:16

Note: Only Volume 2 deals with a single interdisciplinary field, namely, political economy. In all other volumes, there is an interplay between several social science disciplines. This is reflected not only in the selection of themes for individual chapters, but also in the choice of contributors, each giving their analysis an appropriate focus derived from the relevant social sciences.

embodied in the Constitution are but a part). It is vital that our analysis of this dual process of evolution should include popular movements which act from outside the institutional structures in staking their claim for a part in the shaping and implementation of policies affecting their life and environment. There is much that needs to be done here in order to reflect the impact of specific movements on the general direction of politics in India and to focus on the interrelationships between different arenas of political action. Volume 1, which focuses attention on the political evolution of the Indian state, and Volume 3, which deals with the impact of numerous social vectors (stemming from cultural and religious diversity, religious plurality, caste hierarchy, gender inequality, and Adivasi discrimination) that cut across the vast mass of the dominated and the oppressed, are crucially related to this methodological requirement.

In a society in which (thanks to Gandhi's influence), special significance continues to be attached to decentralized local action on a 'voluntary' (as opposed to a 'regimented') basis (often moving from one practical issue to another, rather than on the basis of a total or holistic ideology), the impact of struggles originating in the concrete experiences of communities. This is especially relevant since the economy and social bases of a number of communities (in Indira Gandhi's euphemistic language 'the weaker sections of society') are threatened, often as a direct consequence of government policies seeking to fortify the classes and interests that sustain the ruling parties in power. This is in fact attempted by focusing on specific topics, especially in Volumes 3 and 4, with some reference to simultaneous processes of fission and fusion between segmented identities and class identities with which popular struggles in a variety of socio-political contexts is suffused.

Volume 3 includes, among other themes, for example, Rao's characterization of the political dimension of the socio-economic struggle for survival of the Adivasis (Ch. 13), Nayak's treatment of the conditions of life of the 'indigenous peoples' (i.e. Adivasis) of Orissa (Ch. 12), Patel's analysis of the political dynamic underlying the discourse of communalism (Ch. 3), Chandra's examination of the relations between Hindus and Muslims in the rural north Indian context based on a critical reading of two novels (Ch. 4), Sheth's discussion of 'Other Backward Castes' in the context of the Mandal controversy (Ch. 9), Suresh's account of the Dalit movement (Ch. 11), and Omvedt's treatment of the anti-caste movement (Ch. 10).

In Volume 4, a number of contributors deal with specific themes dealing with the interpenetration between class, on the one hand, and segmental identifications such as caste, region, religion, and gender, on the other. Examples of such discussions include Vidyasagar's

discussion (Ch. 6) of the challenges posed by the new agrarianism to the left political forces; Tulpule's account (Ch. 3) of the fragmentation of trade unions; Hensman's examination (Ch. 2) of the impact of industrial re-structuring on men and women workers; D'Souza's analysis (Ch. 4) of the casualization of labour; Nauriya's essay (Ch. 9) on the struggles in the sphere of civil, human, and democratic rights; and Krishna's treatment (Ch. 14) of the tension between the state which tries to appropriate dissent and people's movements which attempt to keep dissent from being stifled by the state's partial or fragmentary efforts to meet popular demands.

2. State policy and the politics of economic development

A highly sophisticated body of literature (mainly but by no means entirely economic in its disciplinary origins) has developed on the impact on Indian society of the government's development policies in general, and of planning in particular. It has addressed the policies of the government in respect of industrialization; food production, accumulation, and security; anti-poverty drives; droughts, famines, and other 'Acts of God'; generation of employment opportunities; health, education, and social welfare; as well as long-term strategies involving the reorientation of markets, export, import, balance of payments, the terms of trade between agriculture and industry within the domestic economic sphere, and the controversial package combining massive doses of devaluation with far-reaching measures of de-control and liberalization of trade. These themes are explored in several chapters, especially in Volumes 2 and 4.

Volume 2 specifically focuses on a number of discussions which include the relationship between the discourse of planning and the actual economic strategy followed by the government; continuity and change as represented by the fluctuating fortunes of planning in the history of independent India; the political and economic consequences of the government's policies of liberalization and technological development; the unevenness of agricultural development between different regions and its political consequences; and the government's approach to poverty alleviation. Volume 4 focuses on questions centrally involving the transformation of trade unions; fragmentation of labour; proliferation of the bourgeoisie; the impact of the educational policy of the state on the poorer sections of the population; and the political economy of the state's orientation towards environmental issues.

Very little analytic work has been carried out by political scientists about crucially important questions such as:

- i. the impact of political forces on development;

- ii. dynamic choices and strategies that have entered the sphere of policy since Independence;
- iii. the impact of balancing the requirements of 'capital' and the demands of 'labour' in particular, and of society in general;
- iv. the role of the state in setting the agenda (hidden and otherwise) of economic management and development; and
- v. the experience of a vast proportion of the mass of the population which contributes more to the process of development than it receives from it.⁴

The increasing awareness shown by an expanding section of socially conscious economists relating to the political consequences, costs, options, and opportunities that choice of strategy in the economic sphere inevitably entails, is not matched by a similar awareness on the part of political scientists of the interaction between political and economic factors in the unfolding of a particular pattern of economic development. The chapters in Volume 2, exploring economic policies, consciously address the political processes entering this area, whilst the two views of liberalization regard the underlying dynamic from the different perspectives of technological progress, on the one hand, and political cost to the mass of the people, on the other.

3. *Uneven and unequal development*

Far-reaching social and cultural changes have followed in the wake of unequal and uneven economic and political development in India. These have been subjects of sociological and anthropological studies as well as interdisciplinary explorations by students of 'cultural change'. Some attempts have been made to provide accounts of change in India in this general sphere. As sociological research has a predilection in favour of meso-level investigations whilst anthropologists focus mainly on micro- (and occasionally meso-) level research, a general overview of social change (especially with particular reference to its underlying political dynamic) is hard to come by.⁵

⁴ The seven volumes resulting from the American Social Science Research Council project on 'Development' (all published by Princeton University Press) focused attention primarily on 'governance', 'order', and formal 'democracy'. Their interest lay in comparing the 'democratic' potential of underdeveloped countries with the actual conditions prevailing in the industrialized bourgeois-democratic societies of the West. It did not include a serious attempt to view politics from below. Neither did it take into account the role played by political forces that mobilized opposition against government policies which resulted in uneven and dependent development (see, for example, O'Brien, 1973).

⁵ For an excellent discussion of this general problem, see Cohn, 1987. See also Srinivas 1969, Gough, 1981, and Saberwal, 1986, for contrasting orientations to the question.

Because India has a rich and varied past, much of the discussion of social change revolves around 'continuities' from and 'adaptations' of past practices, rather than concentrating on the impact of movements orientated towards safeguarding the vital interests of the poor. These are threatened, for example, by (a) modernization; (b) development; (c) emphasis being laid on 'private' property at the expense of 'communal' property in the process of aggrandizement of economic development by powerful classes; (d) new forms of penetration of 'primordial affiliations and loyalties' (e.g. caste) into socio-economic and political structures; (e) intensification of 'unequal exchange' in a context of acute forms of 'uneven development'; and, last but not least, (f) the emergence of mass-based movements with the specific aim of advancing the submerged interests of 'subaltern classes'.

A number of chapters brought together in these volumes (especially Vols. 2, 3, and 4) reflect an increasing awareness, especially on the part of younger and less conventionally academic students of politics, of the need to analyse and characterize the political underpinnings of the dynamic that has been unleashed since Independence within the country as a whole and in different parts of India by forces of social and cultural change. Two different balances have been kept in mind in the choice of topics and contributors—between empirical substantiation and analytic interpretation, and between different social sciences and substantive themes.

4. Levels of analysis

On the one hand, the work presented here is interdisciplinary (and in fact, cross-disciplinary) in character. On the other hand, our analytical objective is to come to grips with concrete substantive concerns that provide the context for examining underlying political, economic, social, and other forces. This has in some sense compelled contributors to be methodologically particularly aware of the implications of the two different ways of segmenting spheres of interpretation and analysis—namely, in accordance with the social science disciplines involved, and by the substantive topic addressed (*see* Fig. 0.1)—and to refrain from running them into each other, whilst taking care to differentiate between the two levels of analysis.

We have also attempted to be analytically conscious of two different levels of treatment of political processes which in practice overlap: (1) the level of analysis that stems from a linguistic semiological orientation (e.g. as reflected in new slogans, words, and the political loadings that they acquire over time); and (2) the level of analysis that stems from an understanding and exploration of substantively significant components of the Indian polity. This awareness has been

sought to be complemented by the task of identifying (taking into account the historical dimension of all socio-political processes), significant phases of change, of analysing quantum leaps and transformations, and of characterizing qualitative and quantitative changes with a degree of precision. Thematic coherence has been striven for in order to make it possible to draw out analytic threads that are applicable across the board to different facets of Indian politics.

Two issues relating to the concern of this method with the link between terms of discourse and the substantive processes from which they are derived need to be made explicit. First, whilst a critical analysis of various terms and theories of discourse is essential, studies involving these must show an awareness of how the terms of discourse themselves change and do not remain frozen constant. It must be emphasized that a pure discourse theory cannot deal with a dynamic situation. Second, we ought to remember too that Western categories of description and analysis of indigenous political processes can have the effect of obscuring our vision. The linguistic philosophy underlying the analysis of these terms is based on concrete experience that is radically different from reality. Most political discourse actually takes place in the vernacular. We are aware of the need for work (not contained in these volumes) dealing with the question of how mediation takes place between terms encoded in law (for example) in English and political practices locally in vogue. This is an area which will bear much future exploration.

5. *Quantitative change and qualitative transformation*

As far as possible, an attempt has been made throughout this work to capture a sense of the qualitative aspects of change as well as to provide some comprehension of the orders of magnitude involved by carefully examining the transformations that the language of politics (and the terms of its discourse) has undergone in the last four decades—its slogans, concepts, categories of thought and analysis, its referents in the social, economic, cultural, and other spheres, and the terms used to describe different aspects of politics 'then and now'. It is this concern that has provided the specificity for this exercise and a set of themes for analysis.

In other words, we have been engaged in looking at politics (over time) through the reflecting mirror of the concepts, categories, and terms generated in a context provided by the interplay of dynamic factors affecting the interpenetrating spheres of political, economic, social, and cultural change, without prejudice to explorations of the historical roots of change (stretching back to the colonial and even pre-colonial era) as topics in their own right.

We do not underestimate the need for a degree of commitment on the part of the social scientists engaged in this work to the society in general and to the mass of the Indian people in particular. A scientific contribution arising out of a combination of academic commitment and social commitment can be expected to be distinctive in its own right; it can also be expected to be significantly different and stand out from the work of Western scholars who have the resources and time to fly in and out of India at will, but whose commitment to Indian society is (with distinguished exceptions of course), more often than not, largely subordinate to their commitment to their careers or their own particular specialized academic interests.

The strategy

The studies presented in these four volumes are oriented around a three part strategy (Fig. 0.1). On the first level, we have concentrated mainly on the tiers of government, including the state structure (arising out of the springboard of the Constitution), electoral processes, the judiciary and other watchdog institutions, the bureaucracy, and concepts of secularism, civil fundamental and democratic rights, equality, social justice (including aspects of it with no explicit economic content). Volumes 1 and 3 contain a number of chapters which pursue these and other related themes.

In overlap with these concepts, but constituting a separate category, are broad concepts of the role of the state in economic development, planning, the attainment of technological self-reliance, the adjustment of conflicts between the industrial and agrarian sectors of the economy, ensuring equality of access to different classes and segments of the population to state-provided education, health, and social services, the operation of the multi-party system with the forces of inter-party and intra-party oppositions ranged against one another along lines stressing dissent or dissidence or contradiction, the pursuit of policies aimed at positive discrimination of certain groups or categories of people. These are explored in specific thematic contexts in various chapters in Volumes 2 and 3.

The third category of concepts embracing movements outside the purview of the constitutional framework (e.g. movements 'to empower the poor', caste organizations, women's movement(s), and other kinds of activist politics) is analysed in various chapters in Volumes 3 and 4.

In these volumes a serious attempt has been made to knit together themes involving an analysis of, (1) political and moral notions; (2) the role of the state in augmenting pressures on resources and on

distribution; and (3) the resilience and vitality of Indian society as a whole. The essays specifically addressing the theme of the terms of political discourse, especially in Volumes 1 and 3, are concerned to analyse the evolution of these broad concepts over the past forty years or so with the help of essential historical/empirical material around which their different operational variations gyrate.

Contributors have followed the methodological device of focusing on topics relating to politics, economics, social change, culture, and ideology from the particular vantage point of the circumstances surrounding the formulation and adoption of the Indian Constitution. This procedure has enabled several of them to explore the significance of the realm of politics which has given the Indian public a rich and varied accumulation of political slogans over the years. Not only have these slogans and bywords served as markers and as media for conveying messages and challenges; but they have also been used as codes with varying degrees of effectiveness by ruling parties, opposition parties, and mass movements alike in order to win public support and raise consciousness.

Throughout we have remained aware of the limitations inherent in confining our attention to an exploration of the political sociology of new usages and slogans within a framework of detailed linguistic and content analysis. Whilst this is a minimum necessary analytic activity, its usefulness is bound to be minimal unless it is brought within a more general framework of explanation and interpretation of the political dimension of economic, social, cultural, and ideological changes taking place in India.

These volumes have been written with the awareness that in offering an analysis of social and political change in India we have to take into account not only an incredibly rich and rapidly expanding field of academic writing that is in existence but also a constantly changing and complex political reality that is being shaped before our eyes by a whole range of forces. The interdisciplinary nature of the project is reflected in the choice of contributors who reflect a variety of intellectual and political backgrounds as well as theoretical positions and academic specializations, but who also include individuals whose work in the political field has directly involved attempts to alter existing structures and reshape political, social, and economic forces at work in contemporary India.

The main themes of this work

Our aim is to deepen understanding of formal and informal political processes, to set the context of the major developments affecting

different segments of the population, and to predict the likely course of change and development in Indian society as a whole. Our concern is with the tension that has developed over the decades between the state structures or structures of political power, on the one hand, and, on the other, popular expressions of dissent ranging from protest arising out of the dissatisfactions of civil society to organized movements of resistance challenging the authority and power of the state. The nationalist movement, under the leadership of the Congress, sought to transform the colonial political legacy into a powerful state with the aim of firing the engines of capitalist economic development and establishing a just, socialistically inclined, civil society capable of overcoming poverty.

It is interesting that, in the event, India's development policies have, in fact, led to the emergence of underdeveloped and dependent capitalism (discussed in some detail in Ch. 4 of Vol. 1) on the one hand, and, on the other, a civil society in which absolute poverty has tended to grow in intensity. The systematic discussion of how political terms are generated and deployed by different political forces and sections of the population takes place within the structural framework of the post-independence Indian state in which the Indian nation of the independence struggle was embodied in 1947.

The Indian nation, to which the colonial regime transferred power, was the end product of a specific political discourse. It gave rise to political structures which have developed along certain lines, whilst at the same time they have atrophied in respect of some of the expectations initially associated with their emergence. These structures have their provenance in the Indian Constitution which constituted the main site for the elaboration of the political discourse of the Indian state. The Constitution thus becomes central to an analysis of the changing role of political and bureaucratic structures and an analytic mirror against which concrete experience and the gap that it reveals between discourse and reality must be held.

Volume 1 seeks to demonstrate that two broad perspectives have been deployed by almost all the contributors simultaneously—namely, the perspective of those on whom institutionalized power in general and state power in particular is exercised; and, a perspective of differentiation of the effect of structures of power on diverse segments of the population identified according to a variety of criteria (based, for example, on gender, caste, class, and region).

Central to an understanding of the impact of state power on different segments of the population is a discussion of its variegated economic policy. Starting from a general standpoint of furthering the interests of industrialization (and modernization) in the spheres of private and public enterprise, the government embarked on a plan-

ning exercise of a magnitude not exceeded by any capitalist country since the War. Both industry and agriculture came under the aegis of a planned economy, the expansion and modernization of the latter under the Green Revolution leading to a rapid growth of food production and far-reaching if uneven differentiation of the peasantry (namely, Chs. 7, 8, and 9 of Vol. 2 and Chs. 5 and 6 of Vol. 4).

After seven Five Year Plans, however, the Indian government was compelled to take cognizance of deep-seated changes in the world economy and, in particular, the crisis facing the socialist economies since the beginning of the '80s onwards. Its first step consisted of an experimental measure in 1981 when the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government (1980–4) decided to climb down from the high ground of 'autonomous' and 'self-reliant' economic development and sue for the hand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to a maximum limit of 5 billion US dollars.

Within five years, however, under the stewardship of Rajiv Gandhi, India embarked on a policy of thoroughgoing 'liberalization', an essential ingredient of which was a turning away from planning, and an acceptance of a radically changed code of behaviour on the part of the government towards foreign capital. By 1991, when a minority Congress (i.e. Congress (Indira)) government took power after the tenth general election, India's economic policy had come full circle. Thenceforward, there was nothing to distinguish India from the other supplicants lined up before the doors of international capital and its inter-governmental instruments.

Volume 2 examines the political implications of the changing economic policy of the Indian government for different segments of the capitalist and producing classes. The consequences of planned industrialization and the Green Revolution for uneven development, on the one hand, and regional differentiation and differentiation of agriculture, on the other, throw light on the reality underlying the discourse of planning which dominated government thinking for nearly four decades. A sudden break with the strategy of planned development and a lurch in the direction of a policy of economic liberalization emphasizes that the government may have painted itself into a corner with no alternative policy available to it either from its own advisers or from those opposition parties that are against the shift away from autonomous development and self-reliance.

During the four decades since Independence, social categories in India have manifested a tendency towards refraction under the mediation of change. Categories such as State, region, 'religion' or 'community', 'gender', and 'caste and class' in particular, have tended to become more and more interpenetrating. The pressures generated by an unevenly developed economy under conditions of increasing

economic dependence of the Indian state on the West, on the one hand, and of Indian capital on international capital, on the other, have militated against a policy even of minimum welfare for the vast number of people living below the poverty line.

Economic development in India has resulted in a number of overlapping imbalances: between the agrarian and industrial bourgeoisie; between politicians and bureaucrats at the central level and at the regional level; between the organized working class and marginalized workers; between a rapidly differentiating middle peasantry and the agrarian classes below it; between upper castes and middle/lower castes; between middle castes and Dalits; between the majority community and the minorities; between Adivasis and non-Adivasis; between men and women; and between the state and women.

A relationship of domination and subordination has become an enduring characteristic of the Indian polity. In this, the horizontal (and, to date, essentially non-antagonistic) contradictions between different segments of the dominating élite at different levels of the system (for example, central–local; industrial bourgeoisie–agricultural rich; politicians–bureaucrats) are reflected on the vertical (and fundamentally antagonistic though dormant) contradictions of the society (managers–workers; bureaucrats–mass of the people; police–women, poor peasants, Adivasis and Dalits; local Hindu communalists–poor Muslims, etc. etc.) in such a way as to intensify oppression and ignite violence.

Over the last four decades, the state has increasingly turned ever more sophisticated weapons of violence against a politically conscious and critical mass of deprived and oppressed people. Violence has spread from the structures of the state to the sinews of civil society. The rigours of the new economic policy, the sharp edge of which will be felt more intensely by the lower rungs of society, point in the direction of greater and more anomic urban violence on the one hand, and ruthless and systematic upper and middle caste violence against lower castes, on the other (accompanied by some retaliation by the latter).

Volume 3 pursues this general theme of refraction of socio-economic (e.g. class and gender) and socio-political (e.g. caste; communal identity; regional location) analytic categories mediated by forces of change under a number of different rubrics chosen for their thematic relevance and empirical appropriateness.

India is perhaps the only poor non-socialist country in which the analytic category of 'class' has consistently exercised a presence on both sides of the line separating the dominant and the dominated. It has remained more or less indestructible though the major segments of each class—namely, the industrial bourgeoisie, the agrarian bour-

geoisie, and the commercial petit bourgeoisie; the industrial working class, the rural proletariat, poor peasantry, and landless labour; and the vast under-class of displaced labour, marginalized workers, migrant labourers, and lumpen elements in urban and peri-urban areas have been subject to a process of differentiation, proliferation or fragmentation. The constant process of formation, transformation, and reformation of classes has posed enormous problems for class-based political organizations in general and the communist movement (which is the most important organization of the working class) in particular.

Changes in the configuration of classes have resulted mainly from:

1. severe domestic and international resource limitations placed on the role of the state (despite its undoubted class character and its repressive capacity) as the main promoter of the interests of the industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie;
2. the incompleteness of the 'market revolution' (in other words, the vast expansion and penetration of market forces has not been matched by production and purchasing capacity of large sections of the population);
3. the tendency of capital to squeeze disproportionate surplus from labour (resulting from uneven, distorted, and dependent development of capitalist production);
4. the persistence of pre-capitalist socio-economic relations (and agrarian structures inherited from the colonial period), and mode of production in agriculture side by side with capitalism;
5. the aggressive role played by the non-productive classes (e.g. the bureaucracy in the sphere of the exercise of state power, regional politicians and petty bureaucrats, as well as shopkeepers in a number of States on the northern, north-western, and north-eastern periphery);
6. the deliberate policy of lumpenization of politics practised mainly by certain regional parties (of which the AIADMK, DMK, and Shiva Sena are outstanding/pre-eminent and by no means the only examples); and
7. the large-scale displacement of workers in the rural economy and in certain trades in cities resulting in extensive marginalization, expansion of the migrant seasonal workforce, and casualization of large segments of (especially female) labour and the consequent enfeeblement of working class and trade union organizations.

The processes of class formation in the various sectors of the economy since Independence have been influenced by the political

forces, contradictions, and forms of expression associated with the processes enumerated above.

Yet, despite these obstacles to the crystallization of class forces and to political action based on class interests, class organization, and class identity, the basic class structure of Indian society and political economy has remained more or less intact. The ability of different segments to launch political struggles with the aim of achieving their class interests has, however, been severely circumscribed by the domestic milieu in which political activities take place, and the international constraints that have become increasingly crucial to the development of the Indian economy over the years. The political transformation of India over the last two decades has adversely affected the growth of class power, as reflected in class-based political organizations. The interdependence between the processes of class formation and political transformation is a field that offers a number of themes for investigation.

Class struggle, an important form of political action during the '40s, '50s, and '60s, has become more and more muted. The CPI after the Telangana insurrection, the CPI(Marxist) consequent upon its electoral successes since the 1967 (fourth) general election, and even some of the CPI(Marxist-Leninist) groups since the Emergency ended in 1977, have distanced themselves from their long-term revolutionary programmes, concentrating their attention on short- and medium-term electoral politics. This change has been so far-reaching in character that it has had the effect of 'regionalizing' communism like a number of other political forces in the country (e.g. DMK and AIADMK, TDP, AGP, and even the Janata Dal in the post-National Front government period and especially during the Tenth General Election of 1991). In other words, the communist parties are content to nurture the constituencies in which they are already strong rather than seek new revolutionary political pastures in the hope of spreading their power in the future. The fact that these trends were followed by Indian communist parties long before recent developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, so catastrophic to the future of communism, makes it extremely unlikely that they will be entrusted with the task of revolution during their political lifetimes.

Large segments of the Indian population have become more and more clearly aware of their civil rights, democratic liberties, fundamental rights (specified in the Indian Constitution), human rights (enshrined in such documents as the Unilateral Declaration of Human Rights), right to a sound environment, and related spheres. Increasingly, they have shown readiness to engage in collective action in order to resist various forces that are ranged against them. They struggle against the encroachments of the state (usually in the form of

the bureaucracy, the police and paramilitary organizations), the upper castes, and local machineries of oppression that the structures of power only too readily mobilize against them. At the same time, they have to face the terrorism of the lumpen elements ordinarily mobilized at the behest of populist political forces, including certain ruling political parties at the Centre and in the States, and the polluters and robbers of the environment and community-based amenities. Impressive political struggles and campaigns in various parts of India have been waged in the last two decades. Some of them have been won against heavy odds.

The waning of class action *qua* class action has been paralleled, especially since the late '70s and early '80s, by the rise of other forms of protest directed towards safeguarding and claiming ordinary citizens' elementary but important rights as social beings.

In Volume 4, a number of themes relating to the contours of political transformation under way in India are considered and an assessment of the phenomena of class formation and the political factors affecting class polarization, class fragmentation, class proliferation, and class cohesion is provided.

The wide spectrum of topics chosen for the analysis of these themes should not be viewed as an attempt on our part to conceptualize the book as an exhaustive 'list' of topics which would attempt to cover every relevant force, event, or phenomenon. Far from it. The major focus has never been allowed to stray away from the general themes identified in the course of the project. To a certain extent, our overall strategy may have diminished the number of major gaps in the areas covered. Of course, the problem of gaps cannot be completely wished away in any enterprise of this kind, however ambitious its scope. However, our discussions with social scientists have convinced us that there are no large omissions, and the general method of approach pursued here has the advantage of easily and clearly bringing to light such gaps as there may be or may be revealed in the future with further unfolding of political processes.

Second, none of the four volumes is intended to be self-sufficient or *sui generis*. Each volume forms an integral part of a coherent work. The contributions were commissioned not with each individual volume in mind, but rather according to the major themes which run through the work in its entirety. The final decision to divide the work into these four volumes was made only after a large proportion of the contributions materialized. The distinctive focus of each volume resulted from the evolution of the project and was not determined in advance. We feel that such a procedure has the advantage of maintaining a focus on the identification of key concepts (see Fig. 0.1) which have been illuminated in a number of chapters written from a

variety of perspectives and empirical bases. Rapid changes—changes that elude our analytic grasp—taking place in India, have compelled social scientists and political activists of all ideological and scientific persuasions to rethink their general understanding of the processes under way. This work is offered as a stimulant and as a beginning of such an effort. Our aim is to combine academic purpose with a degree of practical utility to those involved in bringing about change.

The motivation for this project lies in the attempt to try a different kind of experiment in generating political analysis from the usual discipline-bound perspectives in which social science literature abounds. We make no claims to completeness in any sense of the term, our aim being to communicate to readers some analytic impressions about dynamic political processes in a context of social change captured through a feel for texture, insights, and examples, some of which have been briefly alluded to above.

Introduction to Volume 1: State and Nation in the Context of Social Change

Volume 1, starting with the Constitution as a convenient point of departure, seeks to explore three different kinds of concepts which are methodologically distinguishable as

1. concepts originating in the Constitution itself (e.g. secularism, fundamental rights, equality);

2. concepts not explicitly or directly referred to in the Constitution but which, nevertheless, make a powerful impact on society, not least because they usually have their origin in the space represented by the day-to-day functioning of the state; and

3. concepts that originate neither in the Constitution nor in the political space occupied by the state structure and formal political structures that feed into the latter, but rather in 'the guts of society' (e.g. popular movements; activist politics, mass struggles) which capture political space outside the domain of the state and organized political parties.

The different dynamics of these three levels of concept have been

analysed (and their overlap discussed) in a number of chapters, not only in this volume but also in others. Analytic separation of the constitutional, institutional, and mundane political aspects has involved, for example, an attempt (in relation to the first category of concept outlined above) to distinguish between modalities of the state structure, on the one hand, and on the other, the actual internal working of the state in tackling such issues as communalism with special reference to, say, reservation (i.e. positive discrimination of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities in general).

The set of thematic strands, brought together in this volume, focuses mainly on the development of institutional structure and, in particular, the ramification of those structures which constitute the components of the post-colonial Indian state—special importance being given to the continuities between it and its colonial precursor and predecessor. The emergence of the Indian state is viewed against a background provided by the Indian nation as conceived by and evolved in the course of the nationalist struggle under the aegis of the Congress.

Likewise, too, Centre–State relations represents another sphere in which the Constitution is anything but clear. Both the ‘State’ and ‘sub-State’ (i.e. the district level and below) levels of the polity have, as a result, been accorded very little importance in the Centre’s political calculus. This lack of attention to regional and sub-regional factors at play has led to a differential gelling of interests. The process by which the Constitution has been turned into an instrument of the state and of certain interests in control of its power is brought out in this volume and the next.

The Indian Constitution is by no means restricted to a conventional description of the framework of government. It is rich in ideological content. A specific philosophy underlies its structure. It is full of terms, concepts, and linguistic and ideational nuances. A number of aspects of political, social, economic, and ideological goals, to which significant groups subscribe, find a resonance in the Constitution. Furthermore, what the Constitution omits is as significant as what it explicitly states. Thus, for example, ‘caste’ and ‘political parties’—two of the major categories of Indian politics—are altogether absent in the Constitution, though the latter have been recently allowed to creep in through the *Anti-Defection Act* (1985). The task addressed in relation to this general area in this work is to set the importance given in Indian politics to the *form* of the Constitution against the *substance* of politics.

The political system is so deeply rooted in political parties that the logic underlying the whole dynamo or engine of politics can scarcely be understood without moving away from a legalistic into a political framework of interpretation and analysis of the role played by the Constitution. This awareness weaves in and out of a number of themes addressed in this volume.

The question of decentralization of authority from the Centre to the States and to lower levels is studied in several different contexts in these volumes in terms of the extent to which ordinary people become 'empowered' and take part in the making and implementation of policies affecting their lives. Thus, we have not confined ourselves to a study of policy to the exclusion of its ideological basis. Indeed, the analysis of the underlying ideological content of the Constitution in several chapters in this volume constitutes a backcloth against which political pressures in opposition to the state for decentralization can be understood. We have also focused at the same time on the ideas animating specific areas of policy and on the tendency of governments often to adopt casually the latest current fashion as the language of their formulation and propaganda.

The federal nature of the Indian political system as envisaged in the Constitution has been eroded in practice, mainly due to an increasing divergence between the Centre's 'unitary' view of federalism (as a multi-nationality phenomenon) and the view of those who advocate a democratic, cooperative, egalitarian, and decentralized view of federal relationships. The ambivalence of the Constitution on the question of sharing power between the different tiers of government has resulted in an ongoing feud between the Centre and the States on vital questions of policy.

The task of analysing the interaction between structures and policies presents the problem of choosing between two alternative strategies—namely, building from a bottom-up or worm's-eye view of reality, or on the basis of a top-down or bird's eye view. Our experience is reflected in the choice of a mix of approaches—the macro approach for certain questions and a meso- or micro- approach to others.

In another related sphere of interaction between formal structures and actual political forces emerging in the field, the unfolding of reality, as in the case of the North-east, for example, can be encompassed on two interrelated levels: (1) that of the emergence of the state itself, the harbinger of which is the hallowed Constitution, and (2) at the level of the unstated assumption that one party would be indefinitely in control of state power. Yet, in actuality, the Constitution has survived the eventual breakdown of the monopoly exercised by the Congress party over state power. The tenacity of the Constitution in the face of such formidable pressures is brought out in a number of contributions in this volume.

The overall process through which new political forces unfold involves elements of conscious action on the part of the state as a dynamic political and administrative agent, of implicit action on the part of agencies and groups on which state action impinges in specific spheres of activity, and of reactive response on the part of those who

question or resist the 'state'. This volume sets the stage by providing a number of chapters on the theme of the powerful role played by the state in setting the political agenda. The sub-themes under this broad rubric relate to the elaboration of the structures of the post-colonial state in India in the context of Partition.

The crucial feature of political development in India is encapsulated in the contradiction between two interacting logics—the logic of concrete reality shaped by real events and policies, against the logic of the discourses of Indian nationalism, the Indian Constitution, and democratic pluralism (as envisaged by the Congress). The apparent initial confluence of these three discourses was belied by the actual course of independent India's history. The discourse of Indian nationalism, itself a compromise between radically differing viewpoints of those representing divergent tendencies within the Congress movement, was thrown out of gear by the inevitability of Partition (Sathyamurthy, 1985).

The only alternative to the Congress party's nationalist discourse was the one articulated by the CPI. It oscillated wildly between acceptance (indeed advocacy) of Partition, on the one hand, and on the other, a centralization of state power (without due consideration being given to the political, economic, cultural, and social aspirations of different 'nationalities' and 'cultures' of which India consists) (Alam, 1991). As it happened, the CPI's position on Partition led to this discourse being thoroughly discredited by the Congress as a whole and Gandhi in particular.

The distortions in the INC's perspective on nationalism, engendered by Partition, were reflected in the lengthy debates in the Constituent Assembly on the Indian Constitution. Its emphasis on democratic pluralism, secularism, and reformist egalitarianism in the socio-economic sphere (under the aegis of a federal and unitary state structure) was predicated on the assumption that a homogeneous political culture, evolving under the superintending eye of a party which believed that it had impeccable and unassailable nationalist credentials was well placed to realize in practice the ideals that it had sought to embody in its discourses of anti-colonial nationalism, and secular and pluralist democracy.

In the event, however, Indian politics rapidly moved away from its ideational moorings. Political actors made a series of choices, driven as it were by forces reflecting an immediate vested interest in access to power in the state and the economy. These choices directly resulted in undermining the principal aims adumbrated in the Congress party's political discourses, not least because they brought out into the open conflicts and contradictions between (as well as ambiguities in) the interests of different sections of the dominant classes, in addition to

those between the dominant classes and the 'subaltern' masses. The relations between different segments of the mass of the people have been refracted into tensions marked by divisions along lines of region, religion, caste, gender, and culture.

One of the contributors (Ch. 7) draws attention to the matter concerning how the 'democratic' aspect of the political structures that have emerged since Independence can be sociologically and politically characterized. Chapter 8 explores the 'state of the art', as it were, of describing the Indian polity in analytic terms based on the application of a broadly Marxist or dialectical method conceptualization.

As has already been pointed out, the Indian Constitution has played a crucial foundational role in determining the structure of state power by means of its rhetoric, intent, and interpretation. This role has enabled it to become a fulcrum around which several interrelated themes bearing on the Indian state and Indian nationalism (i.e. its global version in the idiom of the 'dominant one-party' ruling the country for nearly decades) are considered.

The roots of gender bias and discrimination suffusing the entire gamut of politics, before and since Independence, are traced in Chapter 3 to the grip on the society exercised by the ideology of patriarchy with which the conceptualization and structuring of the Indian state is impregnated. The Communist Party's highly erratic and inconsistent thinking on the meaning and status of the Indian nation, despite major differences between the CPI and the Congress, was entirely silent on the relationship between patriarchy and the state. The international context, in which India has developed since 1947, has rapidly changed (not only since the end of the Cold War but also over the entire period). Indian economic and foreign policy, based on self-reliance and non-alignment, has been slow to respond to international pressures for a number of reasons which are explored in one of the chapters.

In Chapter 1, Kothari juxtaposes a number of different discourses that have developed over the decades with the Constitutional discourse (which itself is replete with debates stretching back to the pre-Independence period). With the elaboration of political practice, numerous overlapping and interpenetrating discourses emerged, centring around issues relating to institutions, ideology, policy, movements of political opposition, dissent, disengagement, and violence. The outlines of these fragmented discourses are identified with a view to weaving them together with a common thread in the form of 'the long-term struggle for democratic values and institutions'.

Sudarshan's analysis of state structures from the vantage point of their origin and development from the Constitution (Ch. 2) is concerned with the widening gap between theory and practice,

intention and its realization, explicit premisses and implicit goals. The chapter discusses, among other issues, the dilution of the 'directive principles of state policy' (described by Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer as a 'veritable dustbin'), the polyglot influences that went into the framing of the Constitution, the vision contained in it of a fundamental unity of interests among the different state structures (despite the apparent 'conflict' between the three Estates of democratic governance) under threat of fragmentation, and the impact of competing discourses (Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, and Indian) on the Constitution as the site on which the two contradictory strands of political expediency and constitutional propriety are sought to be drawn together.

An important but relatively neglected aspect of state power bears on its patriarchal character. An analysis of this is central to an understanding of specific aspects of state oppression against the weaker segments of society which, in India, include large segments of the population including the rural poor (poor peasantry and landless labour), marginalized workers, the urban poor, Dalits, Adivasis, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and women. Mahanta's work (Ch. 3) focuses on the roots of domination and oppression in society. Denial of the most elementary civil rights to disadvantaged segments of the population, and women in particular, is accomplished by the organs of state power, often by taking recourse to systematic violence. Mahanta examines the politics of rape from the viewpoint of the patriarchal character and role of the Indian state.

The first three chapters are located in the nexus between Constitutional theory, on the one hand, and political practice on the ground, on the other. The transition between these and the two chapters (5 and 6) which deal centrally with institutional structures as such is made through a chapter on the impact of economic dependence on India's international role as a leading non-aligned country. The international environment in which national development (and underdevelopment) takes place plays a considerable role in the reshaping of national, social, and economic agendas and in defining the parameters of change. India's recent experience of international forces, more dramatic than in the past, has been preceded by many an intimation of the constraints imposed by its economic strategy of mixed development. Sathyamurthy's chapter probes this aspect of the linkage between India's national development and international involvement (Ch. 4).

Saberwal's analysis of democratic political structures with special reference to India (Ch. 5) traces their present crisis back to the crowded social and economic tasks which they faced and their reliance on Western institutional styles which stood in sharp contrast to the political styles that prevailed in India historically. He identifies a

change of paradigm during the '70s, stemming from the processes of political mobilization in India around interests and symbols. Earlier optimism about the flexible use to which 'traditional' institutions could be put in modern India gave way to a greater willingness to recognize a wide-ranging de-institutionalization 'of earlier structures such as the caste order and of colonial institutions such as the bureaucracy, as well as of the ethic of public service associated with the freedom struggle.'

Saberwal's reference to structural changes (during the '70s) in the development of the Indian political system is echoed in Chapter 6 in which Vithal reflects on the radically changed role of the bureaucracy during the last two decades. Over the decades all levels of bureaucracy have been brought more and more into the vortex of politics and subject to contradictory pulls between the role that they were expected to play and the role that they were in fact playing. The politicization of the bureaucracy, particularly in the case of the Indian Administrative Service, resulted in a radical shift away from the Centre to the States where members of this service sought to build their power base by making use of their caste and local connections. Even though the full extent of the transformation of the bureaucracy from a Weberian construct into a repository of political power sustained by primordial loyalties is not brought out fully in Vithal's chapter, there is enough in it to suggest that the process has deepened and struck enduring roots in Indian society.

The discussion of the Indian state is followed by two chapters dealing with the two major academic discourses on politics before connecting on to the discourse of the nation. Mitra (Ch. 7) sifts contemporary Western academic writings on Indian politics with a view to identifying and characterizing the three main paradigms that it embodies, and discusses in some detail the flawed nature of each of these. He identifies the following three competing paradigms of:

1. development (which, under the compulsion of having to explain why political development has gone into reverse gear for such a long time, takes refuge in the 'theory' of de-institutionalization and criminalization of politics),

2. functional transference (which has traversed a rather large territory from the adaptive character of tradition in the face of modernity to an identification of 'institutionalized patterns of authority within the state tradition' as the key parameter that accounts for the relative autonomy and resilience of the state in India), and

3. revolution (which in this account hovers between libertarian radical interpretations to a rather ossified version of the Marxist orientation).

Each of these paradigms is shown to be inconclusive if not inapplicable to reality.

Mitra suggests that an explanation for this intellectual shortcoming might lie 'in their essential character as extensions of a "Western" *problématique* and a paradigm with which men and women sought to order their universe in post-Enlightenment Europe'. Once again we are brought face to face with the profound disjunction between Western theory and Indian practice.

Starting with the observation that Marxist historians, historiographers, economists, and sociologists writing on India's development have steered clear of 'dependency' on Western Marxism, Wilson (Ch. 8) points to the comparative poverty of the contributions of Indian political scientists in this field. The lack of dialectical energy that can be reasonably expected in Marxist analyses of the Indian state and society, and of social and political change, is attributed to a somewhat different kind of dependence. Political analysts in the Marxist tradition have largely tended to accept the theoretical formulation of one or other of the Indian Communist parties rather than exploring theoretical issues independently. This has often led to valuable empirical work being lost in a fog of reductionism and 'formulaistic' theory. A major gap in the contribution of Marxist scholars to an understanding of Indian politics is identified in this chapter as 'relatively little analysis of the specific ways in which the daily operation of the state embodies the alliances and contradictions' between the dominant classes within the Indian social formation, the ways in which, as Poulantzas puts it, they are 'inscribed in the institutional materiality of the state'.

The discourse of the Indian nation, viewed in a historical context, provides an essential vantage point from which the discourse of the Indian state becomes intelligible. The three final chapters deal with different aspects of the discourse of the Indian nation. The historical background provided by Das (Ch. 9) places the debates within the Congress movement that shaped the concept of the Indian nation in a long-term perspective. Even though other viewpoints were canvassed from time to time by political forces outside the Congress, the nationalist movement, of which the latter constituted the major driving force, opted for a unitary or centralized nation state that would reflect the interests of the dominant classes consisting of big business, urban professionals, and the bureaucracy. The complacent assumption that once in power the Congress party would be irreplaceable led to a neglect of opposition, based mainly in the regions which increasingly focused on the conflict of interest between the industrial bourgeoisie and its supporters, on the one hand, and the rising regional agrarian and small-to-medium industrial bourgeoisie, on the other. Since the

early '70s onwards, the Congress party has been gathering the divisive fruits of over-centralized political power.

Kaviraj (Ch. 10) constructs his analysis of the nationalist discourse, starting from the early responses of Indians to European entry into India, which were dominated by political and cultural considerations rather than basic economic ones. The early generations of the Indian élite which came into contact with the colonial power readily acquired the alphabet of Western thought and equally readily 'broke off, in a matter of a single century, any links it had with their own country's popular discourse'. Social change, under colonialism, was layered and complex, each layer penetrating the ones lower down and being penetrated by those above. Social layering was mediated through political norms of the civil society set by the élites (the *bhadralok*) which established its distance from the majority of the people by means of a 'high literary culture'.

The discourse of nationalism in India was thus founded on the vision of representative figures thrown up by a syncretically-minded élite. However, it underwent a profound transformation in the hands of Gandhi who, more than any other Indian leader, re-channelled the energies of the mass of the people into anti-colonial nationalist politics. Faced with the two entirely separate worlds of high and low culture, Gandhi 'gradually forged a new configuration of nationalism which, because of its carefully crafted semiotic dualism, could be considered reasonable from both orbits of discourse'. He did not, however, take on the impossible role of a bridge between these two discourses. Rather, he remained 'a hinge between the two discourses'. Since Independence, however, with Gandhi's delicate role in this sphere at an end, nationalist ideology once again projected an exaggerated argument about India's 'composite culture' with consequences of far-reaching significance in the political sphere.

Of all the political forces which intervened in the debates about the Indian nation during this century, the Communist Party of India (CPI) was second only to the Congress in importance. The CPI introduced into the ongoing discourse on the concept of nation entirely new dimensions and questioned some of the fundamental assumptions then in vogue concerning the need for a pre-existent nation as an essential prerequisite for the anti-colonial movement. It also played a crucial role in the ongoing debate of warning against the pitfalls of blind adherence to a theory, in the specific context of India, which was entirely based on European experience.

Alam makes the point (Ch. 11) that the CPI's failure lay not so much in the thinking behind its formal resolution on the question but rather in the cavalier and inconsistent manner in which its main leaders interpreted it according to their convenience and in order to

fulfil their self-appointed role as mediators between the two main protagonists of the Independence movement—the Congress and the Muslim League. More than theoretical lack as such, it was political miscalculation and an unsound style of political functioning that lay at the root of the CPI's failure to intervene effectively in the debate on the Indian nation.

It is also worth pointing out that the CPI did not focus nearly as much attention on the character, shape, and social base of the Indian nation after Independence as it did on the question of the nature of the Indian state and how and by which forces its power would be controlled after Independence. Alam (1991) has explored this question elsewhere.

In this volume, differing political and constitutional aspects of state formation in India are explored against a backcloth of the historic and dominant role played by the Indian National Congress (INC) in the Independence struggle and the assumption of power by the Congress party at Independence. The main conclusion to which the contributions lead stem from the failure, by and large, of the Constitution to deliver on the promises contained in its provisions in such crucial spheres of politics as the relations between the Centre and the State, the relations between the bureaucracy and the elected executives at various levels of government, access to opportunities for deprived sections of society, and removal of gender inequalities and oppression.

The divergence between theory and practice, declared intention and actual implementation of policy, is a reflection on the ambivalence of the constitutional discourse, following the sea-change which the Congress party's discourse of nationalism underwent under the impact of Partition. The democratic discourse—of which secularism and socialism constituted vital ingredients—was refracted in the course of the Congress party's futile attempts to be all things to all sections of the population without demanding any real sacrifices from the privileged élites and ruling classes. As a consequence, India's democratic discourse has undergone a far-reaching process of fragmentation. The repercussions of these changes were felt in India's international orientation no less than in its domestic disposition.

The themes explored in Volume 2, largely concerned with issues of macroeconomic policy, as embodied in the government's five-year plans, logically follow from the political and sociological analysis of the macro-political system contained in this volume. The impact of four decades of the Congress government's overall political strategy and its economic policy on different sections of the Indian people are considered under different thematic and substantive heads in Volumes 3 and 4.

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Fragments of a Discourse: • 1 Towards Conceptualization

RAJNI KOTHARI

Political discourse in India, which takes place at so many thresholds, in a variety of social, political, and professional settings, has been joined of late by the emergence of diverse 'constituencies' representing an assortment of 'movements', and is conducted in a wide range of political (as distinct from linguistic) dialects. This is as it should be in a continental and plural society, provided there exists an identifiable core around which levels, thresholds, and settings reverberate, producing 'voices' that are audible and 'demands' that can in some fashion relate to the system (including voices and demands arising outside the system, meant to 'transform' it). Whether such a core still exists, or is at least emerging, is itself a matter that needs to be discussed, to be discoursed upon. Increasingly, the multiplicity of discourses seems to suggest the metaphor of fragments of a discourse that may indeed be growing in number and diversity of fora and becoming more resonant and even turbulent, but fail to relate to each other in any meaningful or sustained way.

The fragmentary discourse is a reflection of the growing fragmentation and drift of the political process itself. The very diversity and

pluralism of society, which should have provided the basis of an organic and variegated whole, have tended to dissipate it along a myriad social and territorial spaces. These are no longer held together through an institutional core and a set of constitutional conventions and 'rules of the game', as had been the case in the past. The result is more turbulence and turmoil than dynamic unfolding from a variety of vantage points, a bewildering variety of both political form and political content that becomes increasingly difficult to comprehend and 'discourse' upon.

Or, is it that underlying the bewildering variety is a common thrust and meaning that can be detected and brought forth? Is it possible to suggest a conceptualization of modes of articulation that, despite the bewildering variety of expression and representation, can still be discerned in a manner that, at least analytically but perhaps also in substance, can be seen to relate to some larger whole, some dynamic rhythm, some overall 'discourse'? I would like to suggest one such way of grouping the diverse discourses and to draw attention to the lineament of their interrelationship to form some kind of whole. It will still be so many fragments without the totality being merely fragmentary; at any rate, in the fashion of creative anarchy rather than of purposeless chaos and disorder. I shall try this by suggesting a set of thresholds at which the Indian political discourse has been and is being expressed.

Constitutional discourse

First, there has been a long history of constitutional discourse which continues to be in vogue and to give rise to new concepts and controversies. The debate initiated during the sessions of the Constituent Assembly is still with us. I do not intend to go into the various subjects that emerged during the debate as my principal interest is in the nature of discourse rather than the precise content of the issues, although the latter are no doubt also reflected in the discourse. It was a predominantly nationalist-cum-liberal bourgeois discourse, made good no doubt by the far-reaching resolves and assertions contained in the 'Directive Principles of State Policy'. It is these twin facets of the constitutional debate—then and now—which provide the setting for both the continuing dynamism of the political debate in India and the leaning towards the status quo in actual practice by the operators of the system. The tension between the two—radical promise and conservative practice—provides the *leitmotif* of political pressure and response in contemporary India.

The other tension inherent in the unfolding of political practice and theory has been between the twin facets of the discourse

mentioned above: nationalist aspirations and commitments, on the one hand, and liberal ideology verging on socialist assertions in dealing with the 'condition of the people', on the other. Around each of these facets there has been a kind of radical right and a radical left. Positive and creative nationalism has given place to the rhetoric of 'nation in danger', 'threats to national unity', and the inferential demand for a 'strong centre', and for a strong and hard nation-state that would emerge on the world scene as a powerful regional super-state, in the process suppressing all pluralist aspirations and deviant voices. This runs counter to the radicalization of the liberal left rhetoric of social justice, equity, human rights and the more militant concepts associated with the revolt of the peripheries—and the regions—against the Centre. This debate is inherent in the discourse over the nature and structure of the constitutional instruments that we have given ourselves.

It is the same debate that has found fresh reinforcement in the controversy over the concept of the 'basic structure' of the Constitution with which the executive is not supposed to interfere, a concept that has been used by some conservative defenders of the status quo but which is equally amenable to radical interpretations of the Constitution by sections of the judiciary and by organs of public opinion. Even more pronounced use of this discourse and debate has been made through the whole, rather animated, discussion of the concept of public interest litigation. Under this, any citizen can take up an issue of social justice by directly filing a writ in the courts. This concept attracted denunciation as populist and as 'opening the flood-gates' to all manner of public outcry making their way into the high portals of the judiciary.

All this has given rise to quite an array of public debate, more or less all of it having as its reference point the larger vision and sense of purpose that had been written into the Directive Principles but which, given the liberal-bourgeois background of the early breed of constitution-drafters, was left outside the operational purview of the Constitution. But the Directive Principles continue to stir the conscience of sensitive citizens and grass-roots groups, many of whom are pressing home the social objectives of law and legal instruments, and have of late been asking for new instruments and mechanisms aimed at social justice—all the way from the 'right to work' and the 'right to information' to statutory status to the rights of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, implementation of the Mandal Commission report, the setting up of the National Commission on Women, and so forth, all of these equipped with juridical or semi-juridical teeth. Precisely at a time when jingoist and chauvinist slogans are being raised to put down voices of revolt and dissent, such radical demands are being read into

the meaning of the Constitution which is supposed to provide the overriding framework of the polity as a whole. In the context of our discussion of the terms of political discourse, they are opening up a variety of spaces.

Discourse on the political process

When one moves from the constitutional arena to the arena of day-to-day politics, one encounters the spectacle of growing disillusionment. It is disillusionment caused by a widening gap between the theory (or 'model') of Indian politics as it was laid out by both the political leadership and the political scientists in the first two decades after Independence, and its actual practice, particularly in the last two decades. The debate and discourse that has emerged out of this growing hiatus has been characterized by a great deal of reflection on the reasons underlying the wide gap between promise and performance. The reasons advanced for the 'crisis of performance' are diverse and highly fragmentary, ranging from economic reasons for the political malaise to moral and ethical explanations; this, in turn, has affected the nature of the political discourse in the very mainstream of the political process.

The economic argument ranges all the way from explaining away matters by reference to a very thin resource base of a chronically poor society or the 'class character' of such a society to critical evaluations about the way economic development has been conceived, pursued, and managed—thus putting much of the blame on non-political processes rather than on the pursuit of politics themselves. Instead of thinking of economic issues themselves in political terms,¹ this argument has sought to reduce political issues to economic parameters. This is true as much of the liberal-bourgeois economists as of Marxist ones. If anything, the latter are more alive to overriding political factors.

Even more germane to this discussion than drawing attention to economic factors for explaining political failures has been the entire debate on the administrative and bureaucratic reasons which have not only not permitted the political vision to take root (thanks to the proverbial red tape) but have also deliberately derailed political decisions. The inhibition of political vision caused by bureaucratic impediments has been a consequence of the close nexus between the higher echelons of the bureaucracy and the vested interests—corrupt,

¹ One of the cardinal sins of commission on the part of the economists themselves (with such rare exceptions as Raj Krishna) is to have thought of economics in exclusively economic terms.

corporate, communal, and class-based; national as well as international; personal aggrandizements as well as collective *esprit de corps*, working against any design for systemic change.²

Yet another set of propositions advanced for the failures of the political system relates to the discussion of the failure of leadership or the so-called 'crisis of leadership'. Here the contrast between the past and the present seems to weigh heavily—between the generation of Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Rajaji, Azad, and their regional counterparts, and the generation of Sanjay Gandhi, R.K. Dhawan, H.K.L. Bhagat, and Om Prakash Chautala. Quite a considerable political vocabulary has gone into describing the phenomena related to this decline—mafia raj, muscle power, lumpenization, criminalization, among others.

As attention came to be focused on the normative decline associated with leadership issues, yet another set of diagnostics emerged that concentrated on the decline in ethical standards, on the moral decay of the system, on the basic erosion of values. A considerable section of Gandhian and neo-Gandhian refrain in political analysis has given voice to this concern.

These and other reasons have been discoursed upon in laying bare this single issue of the 'crisis of performance'. Among other reasons, it is an issue that captures the basic malaise of the system in terms of a single formulation, for the reason that it touches not just the analysts but the people as such. I have myself written at length on this issue and articulated a number of themes and concepts that are germane to the contemporary political discourse. Among other things, I have focused on what I believe to be the principal malaise, namely the erosion of institutions and the challenge of both 'restoring the political process' (by which I have meant restoring political institutions) and re-institutionalizing the political terrain in terms of processes and interactions that emerge from the grass-roots upwards to 'macro' political structures. To this I shall now turn, as the third major arena of political discourse.

Discourse of institutions

It is my view that for any real clue not only to the 'crisis of performance' but also to many other crises—e.g. the crisis of integration, the crisis of distributive justice, the crisis of over-centralization—one must listen to the discourse arising out of the crisis of institutions.¹

² The Committee of Secretaries of the Government of India is the most recent example of the *esprit de corps*.

¹ Incidentally, the entire vocabulary that has emerged around the idea of 'crisis' itself provides a major clue to the discourse of politics. It is a terminology increasingly resorted to. And not just in India either.

The discourse of institutions relates to a variety of institutional structures. Predominant among these are the institutions of parliamentary democracy itself, of representative institutions to be more specific. The Indian model of democratic nation-building put a lot of faith in these institutions. And it is precisely these that are in a state of disarray, continuously being on the one hand discounted by those in authority and on the other hand put to manipulative use by them in the interest of sheer survival in office.

This is true in the main of legislative and other representative institutions. But it is even more true of the entire gamut of institutions associated with the federal structure. The 'consensus' that had emerged in the Nehru period—across parties and factions and personalities—on both the larger representative framework and within that of the federal dimension (despite the Constitution itself erring on the side of the Centre) is today in a shambles. And much of the political analysis of political scientists, journalists, and other publicists has focused on this, some of them questioning the claims made on behalf of Nehru and the 'consensus' that the system under his leadership was supposed to have evolved.

Meanwhile, a whole vocabulary has emerged on the functioning of the key operational institutions within this framework, namely the crucial instrument of electoral politics. A great deal of discussion has, over the years, centred on the issue of participation in the electoral process and the increasing distortions to which it has become subject. Attention has been drawn to the gradual erosion of the party system (on which too there has been a great deal of writing from the early days onwards). This has led, on the one hand, to a displacement of legitimate 'vote banks' as a means of organizing group politics by a growing influx into the vacuum of lumpenized and mafia elements, and on the other, to an increasing 'participation' of criminal, communal, and corrupt elements throughout the entire range of representative institutions.

And yet there is no large-scale loss of faith among the people as a whole (as distinct from the intellectual and urban middle classes) in these institutions. On the contrary, the pressures from below, including those of the more militant variety, are aimed at making representative bodies both more accountable to the people, and easier to approach; hence the entire discourse on decentralization which is growing with a resounding voice, and on which a new kind of 'consensus' is emerging. On the other side, the federal dimension too is being taken seriously by struggle groups, particularly those aiming at both a territorial and a social redistribution of power, resources, and decision-making structures. On the territorial front, the issues thrown up not just by the Punjab and Kashmir but by the burgeoning

movements in Jharkhand, Assam, Tamilnadu, Gorkhaland within West Bengal, and for Adivasi homelands within Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (including also the revival of sub-State movements even within entirely unexpected areas such as Maharashtra), are all being fashioned around the federal idea. A series of conventions have highlighted these demands, many of which are verging on a broader demand for a confederal polity which could even be extended to cover the subcontinent as a whole.

Other debates from earlier times—such as that on the need to reorganize the federal map in terms of smaller States in order to enable democratic politics to acquire cultural and community roots—are also once again on the anvil. Socially, the demands for constitutional guarantees for a variety of communities—Dalits, Adivasis, Backward Classes—are also couched in a language that indirectly touches upon the federal idea. In short, a wide range of institutional discourse along federal and decentralized lines and—as extensions thereof—on the relationship between state power and civil society, again as integral parts of the ‘federal’ and decentralized ideas, is being pursued vigorously and is likely to grow.

Discourse of policy

The institutional discourse is not merely structural in a narrow ‘institutional’ sense; it is also structural in the sense that it has a social content. This has happened in a variety of contexts—of public policy, of ideological contours, of social movements, and of the larger terrains of dissent, the politics of protest, and the sociology of growing, alienation, anger, and anomie. I shall deal with each of these in turn.

The discourse of policy began almost at the beginning of our journey as an independent state. The whole Nehru style of discourse was essentially a discourse of policy. Planning, development, nation-building, participation of the people in the democratic process, the agenda of social reform through legislation, ‘mixed economy’, and ‘socialistic’ (not socialist) pattern, cooperative farming, land reform, economic self-reliance, and non-alignment were part and parcel of the package of policy pronouncements of the Nehru era. Interlocked with the institutional dimension of national reconstruction, it provided a whole discourse on the directions of the new polity that was also endowed with a sense of purpose about the direction of historical change.

There soon emerged a critique of this particular discourse on nation-building that came from a certain cross-section of socialist thinkers (including certain sections of the Socialist Party) and a few

communist intellectuals (though not from the communist parties themselves in any clear-cut sense). Foremost among these critics was Ram Manohar Lohia who combined in himself radical socialist, Gandhian, and anarchist streams, and gave to his thinking the imprint of his peculiar personality; to some extent driven also by an anti-Nehru psychological thrust which was not only personal but also ideological in character.

Another major critic was Jayaprakash Narayan, whose criticisms became more pronounced (despite much ambivalence and not a little confusion in his thinking) after Lohia's death. Since Jayaprakash's departure from the scene this criticism has been developed by a large variety of socialist followers of Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia, *Sarvodaya* and young activist groups, particularly from Bihar and other parts of the Hindi-speaking North Indian belt (although Lohia's and Jayaprakash's followers are to be found throughout the country).

The crux of the policy discourse between those who followed Nehru and those who opposed him veers around the criticism that Nehru's vision was too global and internationalist—and hence too socially limited when it came to the concrete conditions prevailing in India—for it to be meaningful to the grass-roots of Indian reality. Today this controversy has become much enlarged and has taken in a large range of growing debate and disputation between those operating from the corridors of power in the Indian government and the main political parties, on the one hand, and on the other, those operating outside the state structures.

This debate has manifested itself in some of the formulations as a Gandhi–Nehru discourse on public policy, so far mainly articulated by *Sarvodaya* groups and followers of Lohia. Of late, some of the Marxist criticism of official policies is also becoming critical of the Nehru package and is willing to expose it both for its hypocrisy and for its inherent contradictions. Whether my Marxist friends will like my saying it or not, there is an emerging convergence between the Left and Gandhian streams of basic thinking; some of my 'Gandhian' friends will not like it either.

The Gandhi–Nehru discourse is in many ways rather basic. Both its details and its nuances are too well-known to merit elaboration here—centralization versus decentralization, bureaucratic versus voluntaristic ethos, growth versus employment, statistics versus people, internationalism versus grass-roots. To these must be added another dimension which was, of course, inherent in the Gandhi–Nehru discourse but which has only recently become sharpened and acquired a peculiarly indigenous kind of militancy: urban versus rural. From Lohia to Charan Singh to Sharad Joshi, Tikait and Devi

Lal, a tradition of rural leadership has developed in India which—despite major differences of emphases and personalities—has espoused not just the rural cause in the abstract but the cause of the whole rural hinterland of communities, classes, and even castes. Despite the class-based critique of the rurally orientated perspective (which is criticized for being biased in favour of the upper castes), the rural cause has, at the end of a long period of struggle, acquired a new potency that cannot be ignored.

As the rural interest represented by the landowning farmer class gains in standing and influence, it is facing an internal critique (which until recently used to be external to the rural lobby) on behalf of marginal farmers and agricultural labour, pressing the political leadership within the rural sphere to represent the rural interest as a whole counterposed against the dominant urban—industrial—bureaucratic class interest. The larger ideological struggles between the poor and the marginalized, on the one hand, and the beneficiaries of the development process, on the other, are not covered by the rural—urban discourses. But the discourse represented by these struggles is central to an understanding of the political condition of contemporary India. A significant contribution to this discourse—and to the politics that have led to it—has been made by the Marxist–Leninist groups, operating in several different parts of the country and, of late, making some impact on the mainstream political process as well (e.g. in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and the Punjab).

Another kind of opposition of interests is, however, also emerging. Quite distinct from the rural–urban debate (and its offshoot within the rural segment) is the debate on liberalization of state policy, particularly with regard to industrial licensing and opening the door wide to multinational companies. And yet, as most of the exponents of the rural cause are so dependent in their relationship to the Indian state, they are unable to distance themselves from the advocates of liberalization and privatization. The result could be catastrophic: a convergence between corporate capitalist and rural capitalist interests. This is why most of the more radical activists in the grass-roots movements do not find real spaces being opened up by the ‘peasant movements’. There is a feeling that when it comes to the real interest of the rural poor, they will also be left in the lurch by the champions of the rural sphere of politics!

These policy debates have in the recent past been reflected, of all places, in the role played by the Planning Commission appointed by the short-lived National Front government to implement the policy mandate on which the latter won power. The *Approach Document*, of the *Eighth Five Year Plan*, laid out a peculiarly decentralist, Gandhian, grass-roots and employment (right to work) -orientated framework

based on a perspective of people's participation and freedom of information, and emphasizing the achievement not only of purely economic goals but also of social goals. It was also strongly critical of a too open-ended view of foreign capital and favoured commitment to the development of a revitalized Indian state (and public) sector. It took the view that the instrumentalities of the state should not be dumped on the market.

With the more technocratic and World Bank-schooled economists (lodged, of all places, in the Prime Minister's office) proposing an 'alternative agenda' to the one put forward by the Planning Commission, the basic debate on policy was joined. Since then that particular team at the Planning Commission has moved out but the debates raised by it can be expected to continue as the issues arising from the rural-urban divide and the upper class and Forward Castes' backlash against the Mandal Commission recommendation of a reservation policy for the Backward Classes acquire further edge. In short, a whole variety of contradictory positions on public policy are likely to gain ground.

Ideological discourse

The discourse on public policy is entering a critical phase largely because it is becoming part of the larger debate on how best to achieve the well-being of and a secure future for the people. This is so in large parts of the world. The seductive appeal of the corporate capitalist path adopted by the West and the associated doctrines of liberalization and free market has affected the élites not only of the Third World but of the socialist world as well. The combination of political democracy, peace, and economic liberalism is being advanced as a universal panacea. This cannot but affect India too, and the discourse on public policy thus merges into the larger ideological discourse.

The ideological discourse itself, as it has entered an age of uncertainty, is moving beyond the traditional confines of liberalism *versus* Marxism, representing the two great philosophical paradigms. In India, the Gandhian stream is also in a phase of great ambivalence in its dual capacity of providing a third alternative and introducing major correctives to both the free market and the state socialist modes of thinking, although there is no doubt that there is considerable revival of Gandhian ideas in many specific spheres, even if they have failed to gell together into a coherent ideological frame. As these traditional terms of discourse recede into the background, new issues are emerging that have a bearing on such questions as the role of the state, the doctrine of modernity, the impact of modern science and

technology, the ecological critique of modern economics and the more comprehensive matter concerning what is to fill the vacuum created by the obsolescence of the ideological stream that emerged from the European enlightenment leading to the modernist, scientific paradigm of human affairs.

It can be said without exaggeration that a number of Indians have been engaged on these sets of issues and have tried to provide a fundamental critique of the modern *weltanschauung*. They have raised ontological as well as epistemological issues associated with such a critique. With this our conception of ideology has undergone a profound mutation. The old confidence in this or that dogma has given place to a non-paradigmatic or post-paradigmatic perspective on the relationship between the individual, nature, society, state, and civilization. Yet, it must be recognized that the old conservative paradigm based on a technocratic remaking of all human beings and all societies survives with stubborn persistence; more so with the *seeming* eclipse of alternative visions and world-views.

The persisting model and the emerging critique reflect each other in a raging conflict over the future of human sensibilities and their capacity to relate to fundamental problems of the very survival of human society, in particular of its oppressed and victimized strata, and of their identities and dignity in their diverse plural settings. Emerging issues in this engagement of the dominant model and the resulting critique embrace ethnicity, people's science, ecology, ideas of 'alternative development', decentralized statehood, and grass-roots democracy, on each of which—and across them all—a major discourse is already under way.

Discourse of movements

With the erosion of institutions, the unsettled controversies over public policy, and the growing uncertainty on ideological issues, as well as the decline in democratic functioning of the political process, faith in the capacity of the modern nation-state to provide a framework of both order and equity has declined, and so too the reliance on mainstream governmental and party-political processes. The result has been the rise of a series of movements (as distinct from the earlier genre of more specific economic movements such as the trade union or the cooperative movement). Increasingly also, the policy debates and ideological discourses draw upon inputs from the movements, the intellectuals and activists associated with them, and the somewhat dispersed but nonetheless fruitful debates on basic issues to which they give rise.

Along with some colleagues at 'Lokayan' (a dialogue group that has brought together a variety of academics and activists) I attempted to capture the thrust of these movements in the framework of a 'non-party political process'—political without doubt, but outside governmental and party structures. The arguments advanced in that formulation and the debate generated by it are by now known, at least to socially aware intellectuals and sensitive citizens.

Basically, the argument ran as follows: in a period of deepening social and political crises, marginalization of large sections of the people, and growing conflicts within the social structure and its plural framework, the incapacity of mainstream institutions of government and party to respond to these 'crises' has given rise to growing turmoil at the grass-roots. This has resulted in a large canvas of micro social and political actions which are then (although still hesitantly) sought to be reflected in some *macro* formations of the non-party political type. Lokayan itself aspired to be one such formation that cut across diverse constituencies of civil liberties, environment, women, Dalits, Adivasis, and ethnic and religious minorities, within each of which some kind of a social movement had been emerging. Similar other efforts have been made, more often than not at State and regional levels, but a few at the national level too.

Lokayan and the discourse generated by it through various dialogues and publications apart, the larger span of movement politics has come to occupy an important place in the overall arena of the political process and the policy and ideological discourse emerging from that domain. They have together, across the various constituencies, and singly too, raised many 'voices from below' which I tried to capture in an essay entitled 'The Indian Enterprise Today' (Kothari, 1989). Elsewhere in the world too, such movements have burgeoned with the decline of both Keynesian economics and representative institutions in responding to people's aspirations—the green movement, the peace movement, the women's movement, movements on behalf of indigenous peoples, the alternative science movement and, of course, the wider ideological movement for alternative development and an alternative civilization. In India, while all these are to be found (though very little by way of a peace movement), there is clearly a much greater political thrust to the various movements than is apparently the case elsewhere. There is a tendency of all movements to veer round the idea of the rights of diverse peoples and entities. With the growth of ethnic and regional movements, the political thrust has been further sharpened.

One of the internal discourses within the movement space relates to the conceptualization of non-government organizations (NGOs). Those in authority, realizing the relevance and growing power of the

NGO sector, have in recent years been trying to woo that segment which, in turn, has given rise to a debate over 'co-optation'. This has generated a still wider debate of an ideological kind in which the operators of the state, the corporate sector, and the NGOs are seen to delegitimize the state whereas more radical activists and intellectuals, while waging battle against the state for its excesses and repressive acts, are nonetheless keen to operate in the space occupied by the state, their perception of their role consisting of a transformation of the state rather than its surrendering itself to the market and to international capital. For the latter, people's movements and decentralist policies are to be seen as partners in the process of transforming the state. This is where the debate rests at the moment.

Discourse of dissent

In contradistinction to more radical perspectives pursued by grass-roots activism, but still part of the discourse of movements (as a subset of it) is the discourse of dissent found within the more liberal space provided for (but increasingly suffocated) by the Indian state. Whereas the discourse of dissent as a mode of articulating honest differences and voices of protest against the excesses of the system date back to several decades, it was in the events leading to and following the imposition of the Internal Emergency in 1975 that it underwent crystallization in a coherent way. It is also interesting to note that during the same period the earlier liberal-Marxist divide that had polarized democratic opinion (during the '50s and '60s) gave place to a new convergence in the struggle against an authoritarian regime. The Emergency brought home to Marxists, who had conceptualized liberal democracy as a luxury of the privileged classes, the fact that even the latter had come face to face with the terror of authoritarianism, while the liberals realized that they had in the past overlooked the repression that had been let loose on leftist (and in particular Marxist-Leninist) groups in the name of 'stability' and 'progress'.

The new alliance around the civil liberties platform proved to be a major turning point in the consolidation of the discourse of dissent that rode on a new crest of a human rights movement, forged in India on a platform provided by the twin symbols of civil liberties and democratic rights. The alliance also served to make the traditional civil libertarians sensitive to the oppression suffered by the poor and marginalized sections of the people of India. (They had hitherto limited their concerns to typical 'fundamental rights' of speech and association.) This is what led, for instance (and only an instance), to

V.M. Tarkunde's call for 'Radicalization of the PUCL' in the *PUCL Bulletin*.

Since then a number of democratic rights organizations have sprung up. There has, alongside, been the growth of a particular brand of reporting known as investigative journalism, a special branch of judicial investigation known as public interest litigation (to which attention has been drawn elsewhere in this chapter), and above all, a very wide extension of grass-roots activism that was, in any case, resisting so many aspects of state oppression that had now found access to the courts and the press and civil liberties activists in carrying forward their struggles. All of this has given rise to expanding horizons of the discourse of dissent that seems to know no bounds, thanks largely to the increasingly repressive nature of the Indian state which seems to be acting in collusion with the dominant sections of the Indian élite in both urban and rural areas.

Off and on, changes of regime have led to a restoration of democratic institutions that had been undermined under earlier regimes. But when it comes to the basic rights of the underprivileged and oppressed strata, the 'movement' sees no reason to relax. Nor are violations of the deeper reaches of civilized existence—such as freedom of information and of creative dissent from dominant bureaucratic modes of thinking—anywhere near extinction. Hence the continuing discourse of dissent.

Discourse of alienation and disengagement

Another sub-set of the discourse of movements, but at the opposite end of the discourse of dissent, is the discourse emanating from the growing alienation from the system of sharply marginalized segments of the social structure as well as of other 'peripheries'—regional, ethnic, religious, communitarian. The voices of anger, frustration, despair, and humiliation, alongside assertions of those who are beginning to think of their separate identities and loyalties, add up to the discourse of alienation and occasionally of disengagement from the mainstream body politic. The more exploited segments of the Dalits and Adivasis, on the one hand, and of several territorial units and sub-units on the other, have given voice to a rising discourse of alienation. Not always, but quite often, these two streams converge, as is found in the search by Adivasi populations in North and East India for a 'homeland'; or, for that matter, the convergence between the economically aggrieved sections and those espousing the cause of a separate homeland.

The discourse of alienation is by no means limited to the Punjab

and Kashmir. It extends to many other areas too, within and between regions known as States, on their peripheries and their extended interiors. Over and above alienation on such a vast scale, is the alienation of large parts of entire communities—the Muslims and Sikhs in particular, but others too. It is the relationship of these diverse segments and entities to the Indian state and in particular to the Centre of the Indian state (i.e. New Delhi) that is characterized by feelings of alienation and estrangement. What started off as a project of integrating the social and regional peripheries into the mainstream political process presided over by the Centre has ended up by first excluding and then, as a consequence, alienating them. Hence their feelings, their voices. Hence their discourse. A discourse of alienation and, for some, of disengagement. The only major response from the Centre (that had at one time set itself about to involve and integrate the various segments and regions) has been to browbeat them into quite another project of ‘integration’ that is forced upon increasingly disinterested and alienated populations.

Discourse of violence—and violence of the discourse

Increasingly, the politics of alienation is turning violent—on both sides of the divide. And with that has emerged a whole vocabulary of violence, an arena that has been sprinkled with a variety of concepts and symbols. While terrorism is the standard phrase through which the violence of alienated individuals and groups is being described and, inferentially, state terrorism is the phrase used for the violence unleashed by agents of the state, there is much else in the discourse of violence that itself sounds hard and brutal. The discourse of violence has thus given rise to violence of the discourse.

‘Naxalite terror’, forced encounters, reserve police (police reserved for dealing with popular agitations), and armed constabularies, *Terrorist and Disruptive Practices Act* (TADA), shoot at sight, indefinite curfews, emergency powers, deaths in custody, gang rapes, AK 47 rifles, and much else. And as the discourse itself gets brutalized, brutality increasingly appears to be normal. The result is brutalization of the psyche, particularly of the middle classes who constitute the main legitimizers of a national security doctrine, not just against neighbours but against the people themselves—the workers, the Dalits, the women, the landless—who may develop the courage of protesting against the status quo.

On the other hand, the alienated segments themselves are driven by despair and become increasingly convinced that only violence and the discourse of violence (not just shootings and kidnappings, but threats

to do so and laying claims at having done so) will work. The two ends of the spectrum of violence reinforce each other. Together they produce a common understanding of the means available for 'success' and, together, they also defy the real centres of civil society and the civilization. In the process—and the common discourse contributes to this too—violence becomes a way of life as well as a means of both governance and redress against its excesses, develops a technology that is peculiar to the violent way of life, and eventually becomes a vocation that is distinctive in a number of different ways.

In the meantime, the engineers of 'law and order' themselves shield their actions by increasing recourse to populist jargon; in a period of ideological vacuum, populist shibboleths, on the one hand, and growing recourse to repressive measures, on the other, become surrogates for policy. And yet neither seems to work. Neither produces a stable social order (or even enables people to move gradually towards a social order).

Weaving together a fragmented discourse

My attempt to outline the discourse of politics in its various manifestations—from the constitutional, political, and institutional arenas to those of public policy and ideology to the spaces opened up by various movements and dissenting and alienated components of these, including the ones that are forced into violent encounters—appears like describing a whole series of fragments through which a large diversity of discourses takes place. And yet is there not a way of encapsulating it all into one meaningful discourse? I suggest there is. At any rate, so it appears to me, at least as I have presented the 'fragments'.

It is not my contention that political discourse arises from one homogeneous set of ideas that is then reflected in a diversity of settings. In history there is no such unifying *telos*, no super-intelligence coordinating it all. That would be assuming quite the opposite of what I want to stress as a running theme underlying the different discourses. A common thread running across them all is the long-term struggle for democratic values and institutions that is pitched against forces of the opposite kind: colonial, feudal, authoritarian, personalized, bureaucratic, technocratic and 'universalizing', in the fashion of a proselytizing and homogenizing modernity that is emanating from exogenous sources.

It is to this continuous conflict that this chapter refers—the conflict between the struggle to realize a democratic polity by the large masses of the people and the intellectuals and activists making common cause

with them, on the one hand, and, on the other, the anti-democratic postures and practices of the privileged élite strata which believe that allowing that effort to succeed would undermine their dominant and domineering role in society. The struggle has been waged for over a century but has become intensified only in the last generation or so, and still continues unabated. There is a great deal of scope for hope but not a little concern too. Much would depend precisely on the manner in which the discourse of Indian politics is conceived and articulated—towards a humane governance and an alternative development process or not. There is every reason to hope that in the long run it will be towards the former.

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The Political Consequences of • 2 Constitutional Discourse

R SUDARSHAN

This chapter highlights some distinctive features of constitutional discourse in India, and outlines some of its principal consequences for the stability of the constitutional order and political practice. When compared with the fate of constitutions drawn up after World War II in many newly independent countries, the durability of the basic constitutional coordinates in India, despite serious political and economic crises, is noteworthy. The analysis of some key institutional conflicts, in particular conflicts between the central government and State governments over the operation of federal provisions in the Constitution, and between Parliament and the judiciary over fundamental rights and the power of amendment, is intended to elucidate the ground rules which determine the terms of political discourse in India.

The chapter also attempts to explore the dialectic between jurisprudence and political economy, striving to maintain a sensitivity to internal and external dimensions of constitutional law. The Indian Constitution is regarded here as more than a mere text defining the parameters of the state as an organization reflecting and protecting

class interests. The constitutional text is read as a repository of certain values, ideals, meaning, and tradition, going beyond its instrumental use at the hands of politicians, officials, judges, and litigants.

Dialectics of law and state

My focus here on the Constitution and formal rules governing the operations of state institutions is rather old-fashioned. It was a central feature of political 'science' when it first began to acquire an identity as an academic discipline. This emphasis accompanied an assumption that formal constitutional rules could explain regularities of behaviour. There was undoubtedly a strong prescriptive tendency in these early treatises on state institutions which obscured the complex relationship that actually exists between formal rules and political behaviour.

The question-begging nature of the assumption about formal rules and actual behaviour was stressed by the 'behaviouralist' movement in political science, which began in the United States and rapidly spread to different parts of the world. It was a reaction against the legal formalism of early works in political science, and was based on the perception that important political realities are often not revealed in constitutions. But just as the reaction in jurisprudence to the legal formalism of the 'black-letter' law tradition led to a swing to the other extreme of rule-scepticism and legal instrumentalism, in political science the reaction to the idealism surrounding the concept of state has led to the extreme of its virtual elimination as a useful concept.

It is interesting that the demise of the concept of state should occur at a time when the powers of modern states were vastly increasing. The very diminished and relentlessly behaviouralist conception of politics as 'who gets what, when, and how' could dispense with the concept of state (Lasswell, 1950). It could be applied in any social context, from country clubs to courts and congresses. The distinction of scale and substance is eliminated when public business and public law are denied a special and unique status. In abandoning the concept of state, political 'science' also abandoned important classical concerns: the good life of citizens, the kind of political rule that would foster civic virtues in a community, and devices to generate amongst individuals consistent and enlightened views coinciding with public interest.

Although what is empirically observable is a multiplicity of institutions and not a monolithic entity corresponding to what we call the 'state', our understanding of the nature of these institutions is likely to be richer if our theories could allow for a unifying concept. Ontology

(the nature of known objects) need not be confused with epistemology (the nature of knowledge and ways to get to know the objects). This methodological point is well recognized in Marxist literature which accords prominence to the concept of the state. But other difficulties encountered in Marxist theories of the state and law must be recognized and surmounted.

In Marxist theory the state is considered to be profoundly ideological. It is described as an 'illusory political community' which obscures the reality of class exploitation. In the same vein, the law is also regarded as profoundly ideological. Since ideological hegemony is taken to be the rationale for law and state, there is often a tendency to regard all institutions—educational, religious, and cultural—that participate in the creation of ideology as part of the state apparatus.

Although the law excludes many through doctrine, procedure and cost, its benefits are not exclusively monopolized by those who rule. The ideology of the rule of law is a complex and contradictory one. Its rhetoric is not altogether empty, and contains spaces from which one may mount a radical critique of the practice of society.

The difficulty with theoretical generalizations about law in Marxist writing is not confined to the denial of liberating prospects or spaces in the law, or the denial of the law as an object of struggle among social classes. The method of explanation adopted in most Marxist writing is a major problem.¹ The quest for objectivity and scientific accuracy induces a neglect of intentional understanding of individual actions and causal explanations of their interaction. The consciousness of the ruling class, and of judges who think they are doing justice, is taken to be 'false', as against the objective reality of the mode of production. But consciousness as a state is real enough to those who have it. It may be aware of some interests and not of others, it may be critical and sensitive, or blasé and assertive. In any event, it can influence motives and action and intend certain outcomes rather than others. The self-understanding of agents of their situations becomes irrelevant in functionalist explanations of the nature of law and state. Purposive actors are eliminated, and only purposes are present as predicates without subjects.

If in fact the bourgeois liberal legal order is so structured that it will always serve to maintain and reproduce the capitalist system, then the importance of social conflict is seriously diminished. On the other hand, if these conflicts can determine what laws and policies the state will adopt, then an account of the way they impinge on the state will bear the burden of explanation, and function becomes redundant.

¹ For a brilliant exposition of the weakness of functional explanation in Marxism, see Elster (1982).

It is partly because of these methodological difficulties in providing explanations that are adequate to the level of analysis, that exegetical references to classic works in social theory typically take the form of 'on the one hand ... but, on the other...'. Thus, on the one hand, Marx regards law and state as part of the 'superstructure', determined by the 'economic base', but on the other, Marx's own concrete and empirical analyses of contract law, the *Factory Acts*, and the laws related to the transition from pre-capitalist production demonstrate the fundamental changes law can work on production and class relations.²

Similarly, we may say that on the one hand, the Constitution is an ideological text conceived by a ruling class and, on the other, it can be a valuable weapon and shield from the perspective of dominated classes. While the state is conceptualized here as a real institution with purposes of its own, it is also recognized that it operates in the context of class divisions which have an economic and social dimension. While the former relates to the ownership and control of the means of production, the social value of property is the consequence of a large number of factors. The law plays an important part in the definition and value of property.

As the Constitution and law represent legitimizing norms, institutions, and practices, struggles in society over the distribution of advantages and disadvantages, are reflected in changes in the law through control over the political authority of the state. This implies that struggles for changes in the law are not mere epiphenomena. They actually matter very much for those involved in those struggles.

The judiciary is conceptualized here as a part of the state whose agents are in a position to exercise power over the agents of the state and over society. But this power is at the same time active and structured. Judicial motivation is not taken for granted on the basis of the class origins of judges. An attempt is made to explain judicial decisions in terms of the judges' perception of their position, and the possibilities open to them in the light of special features of judicial discourse that are not shared by the legislature and the executive.

Fusion and confusion of colonial and constitutional discourses

The conventional institutional division between legislation, administration, and adjudication was established in India by the colonial

² See Young 1979. Young concludes: 'If the thesis of superstructurality is rejected, there emerges a Marxian approach to bourgeois law which regards as an empirical

power. It is often claimed that few would question the enormous importance to modern India of the British creation of a rule of law. This opinion takes the rule of law to be a set of autonomous norms and institutions exported to India from Britain. This is, however, an ahistorical view of the rule of law which encourages the tendency to regard it as a precious legacy passed on from one society to another, leaving it to the recipient to either cherish or squander.

It must be remembered that the state in Britain gradually evolved as a compact between the King, the Lords, and the Commons, and is founded on parliamentary sovereignty. Arguably, the dissociation of law from the ruler could be traced back to the medieval notion that the law was prior, and superior, to the ruler. The entire set of customs and practices which informed collective life, the Common Law expanding liberties, together with a maze of statutes, all served to create a consciousness of the high hedge of law that would keep out royal absolutism and maintain the balance among the concurrent parts of a Parliament.

But this was not the case in India where courts *followed* conquest to assist in the establishment of authority and order. The inscription over the seat of imperial power in the Central Secretariat in New Delhi appropriately reads: 'Honour the State, the Root of Law and Wealth'. The law was subservient to the colonial state, and the rhetoric of the rule of law was important for the rulers in India to maintain affinity with their kinsfolk in Britain, rather than to legitimize their rule in the eyes of their subjects. By its very nature the colonial state ruled out the strict autonomy of law, and the separation of law and politics, that is characteristic of a liberal legal order. Its dominant posture was inevitably repressive, given its necessity to 'hold down' the country. Colonial legal institutions were always subordinate to political power dictated from London, and lacking a consensual basis in Indian society their authority rested on the coercive power of the state. A regime of rule-governed administration introduced the notion of legality, but the rules were accommodated to political expediency.

As an organization, the colonial state was not monolithic, and the capacity of its agents to act in a concerted manner was continually affected by inter-institutional differences and protracted, time-consuming correspondence exchanged between provincial administrators,

question in every case the extent to which law has been created and moulded by capitalist class and production relations, and the extent to which the reverse has occurred. This approach lacks the aura of high theory that the word "superstructure" evokes, but is both truer to Marx's own theoretical practice and more likely to result in an understanding of bourgeois law.' (P. 165.)

the Government of India, and the Secretary of State in London. Conflicts between the judiciary and the executive, which began with the creation of the Supreme Court in Bengal in the 1770s, remained a recurring feature. Yet it is only from the perspective of the agents of the state that differences of opinion, and inter-institutional competition convey a picture of diverse and competing interests. To the majority of its subjects, however, the colonial state was a monolithic power acting in the interests of Britain. It is important, therefore, not to make too much of the apparent pluralism within the state organization when one is concerned with its relationship to civil society.

The classes which acquired dominance during the Raj were the substantial peasants whose interests were protected through various legislative, judicial, and revenue administration devices throughout British rule, and the industrial bourgeoisie which managed to secure some favourable state intervention during the inter-war years.¹ These classes were in themselves heterogeneous. The landowning class included those who cultivated substantial holdings on 'capitalistic' lines with hired wage labour, and those who continued 'feudalistic' production with tenancy and sharecropping arrangements of various kinds. The industrial bourgeoisie comprised monopoly business with interests spread throughout the country, small urban businessmen in control of single industries with a limited regional base, and an educated middle class made up of various professional élites, including lawyers, doctors, and the civil service. The natural subordinates to these classes were landless labourers, petty traders, the urban workforce, some in secure employment, and others unemployed or only intermittently employed.

Colonial law played a part in shaping and giving greater value to forms of property in land and capital, as compared to labour and skill. In 1947 the colonial state apparatus was transferred to an Indian élite comprising those representing agrarian interests, Indian industry, and middle-class professionals. A liberal legal order, legitimated by

¹ The power of the zamindar rent-receiving class was already considerably eroded in the later years of colonial rule. The alliance between the peasantry and the industrial bourgeoisie in later nineteenth and twentieth century Europe has been linked by Moore (1967) with anti-democratic, fascist states. Moore assumed that because the landless peasantry was docile a democratic state persisted in India. This assumption is contrary to the available evidence of agrarian revolts and struggles throughout colonial and post-colonial periods. Moore's error lies in his taking zamindars and other large landholders, rather than their 'occupancy tenants' and other substantial landowners, to be partners of the ill-fated alliance. This substantial peasantry has had enough control over electoral politics to favour democracy rather than support a more corporatist state in India. Those who saw the 1975 Emergency in India as confirmation of Moore's thesis that democracy cannot survive without social revolution need not be puzzled by the restoration of democratic politics in 1977 if they note this point.

democratic consensus, remained an aspiration of the nationalist movement. But when the opportunity arrived for framing a constitution incorporating new ideas, continuities with colonial history proved more important.

Congress and the Constitution

A Constituent Assembly, directly elected by adult franchise, was a demand of the Indian National Congress from the 1930s onwards.¹ However, the Congress eventually accepted the terms of reference proposed by the Cabinet Mission in May 1946, and settled for an Assembly indirectly elected by provincial assemblies of British India, whose electorate was less than a third of the adult population in each province. The representatives of the Indian Princely states were chosen by electoral colleges constituted by their rulers.²

During the period of nationalist agitation the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, consciously tried to project an 'alternative' state to which all those who rejected the legitimacy of the Raj could give their allegiance. It began to establish a mass base in the 1920s. Gandhi's strategy of non-cooperation called for mass mobilization of people who had, until then, taken little interest in politics. But the leadership of the party, from the District Congress Committees, the All India Congress Committee, up to the High Command comprising the President and the Working Committee nominated by him, was dominated by landowners, middle-class intelligentsia (mostly lawyers), and businessmen. Historians have attempted to explain the combination of groups drawn into the nationalist agitation in terms of social forces arising out of economic change, the impact of education and institutional avenues available for participation in public life, or in

¹ The 1933 *White Paper*, which provided the basis for the *Government of India Act 1935*, was rejected by the Congress which said that the 'only satisfactory alternative' to the White Paper is a Constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise or as near it as possible, with the power, if necessary, to the important minorities to have their representatives elected exclusively by the electors belonging to such minorities' See Austin (1966: 1)

² For details on the composition of the Constituent Assembly see Austin (1966, 1–25). Elections to the Assembly were completed in July 1946. The Congress won 203 out of 212 general seats (representing every community except Muslims and Sikhs). Four Muslim seats and one Sikh seat went to Congress candidates, giving the party 208 out of 296 seats allotted to the provinces under the Cabinet Mission Plan. The Muslim League won 73 out of 78 seats reserved for Muslims. The Muslim League decided in July 1947 to boycott the proceedings of the Assembly which met for the first time in December 1946. After Partition, the number of Muslim League members in the Assembly was 28. The Congress thus had an overwhelming majority in the Assembly.

terms of power-brokering and factionalism in the context of opportunities offered by the Raj.

The Congress increasingly centralized decision-making and adopted an accommodative and conciliatory style of politics, rather than one ideologically polarizing its diverse bases of support. It could not act as a political party with a fixed programme and, at the same time, sustain its self-image as an 'alternative' state. It had to espouse simultaneously several interests, although its leadership composition indicated the dominance of some interests over others. Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship served to provide the ideological basis for ownership of property, while it preached an egalitarian ethic to those who controlled property and wealth. The egalitarian content of this ideology encouraged radicalism at the grass-roots. The Congress contrived to maintain awkward distinctions between the oppression which the British Raj visited upon *ryotwari* tenants through the revenue law, and the impoverishment caused by zamindari exactions in the form of exorbitant rents. It tried to contain radical turns in the nationalist agitation to avoid escalation of class conflicts among its supporters. In order to centralize control over the party and impose 'consensus', the Congress continually juggled issues and tactics.

The Congress High Command became adept at contriving unity for agitational purposes. This oligarchic style of decision-making was continued after it came to power. Governance responsibilities inculcated a sense of pragmatism. Firsthand acquaintance with imperatives of order and stability led the Congress to shed radical visions of Swaraj it may have had. The Constituent Assembly quickly set aside Gandhi's vision of the state as a network of village panchayats and devoted the greater part of its deliberations to reviewing and amending the 1935 Act.⁶

The Congress 'oligarchy' transposed to the Constituent Assembly the peculiar blend of ideological norms it had internalized and legitimized during the course of nationalist struggle.⁷ These norms were combined with a pragmatic justification for centralized powers and *raison d'état*. The self-image of the Congress was of an organization that could transcend partisan interests. Rejecting Gandhi's advice to disband the Congress as a party and convert it into a social service organization, the Working Committee claimed:

⁶ The most accessible history of the work of the Constituent Assembly between 1947 till 1949 is Austin (1966). Rao (1965-71) is a five-volume series including important documents on the framing of the Constitution and a summative study.

⁷ Austin (1966) uses the term 'oligarchy' to refer to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly and India's first President, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the prominent Muslim Congressman and Education Minister.

If India's destiny is to be fulfilled and it is to take its proper place in the comity of nations, then its unity is essential, and there is no other organization more fitted for this difficult task than the Congress ... India requires for its gradual and orderly political, social and economic all round progress, one big political party, large enough to guarantee a stable government, and strong enough organizationally to maintain its hold and influence over the people. Such a party of course must have a programme of radical change aiming at social justice and eradication of exploitation in all its forms."

This claim implied that the Congress party had a unique character, and all other political parties were necessarily partisan and sectional in their outlook. 'The Congress' distrust of party politics was reinforced by the representation on the Drafting Committee of prominent non-Congress lawyers who had been elected to the Constituent Assembly on the directions of the High Command.⁹ These men could not bring themselves to see political parties, the key to the working of the Westminster model they adopted, as being necessary for the purpose of *establishing* norms for the new state. The framers, therefore, drafted a set of ideological norms which all parties were expected to acknowledge as fundamental in the governance of India. The prescription of norms articulated by the Congress to control and guide political decisions was intended to *displace* politics as an activity that would contend over fundamental ideologies and principles, and seek legitimacy for them through electoral mandates.¹⁰

Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee, was strongly in favour of incorporating ideological goals and principles in the Indian Constitution. He observed that

"Congress Bulletin (1947.5,17), quoted in Austin (1966:29). Gandhi's advice that the Congress as a 'parliamentary machine' should be disbanded and turned into a social-service organization based on panchayats was given to the party's Constitution Committee in January 1946, and again on the day of his assassination on 30 January 1948. The two plans in their English translation are included in Rajkumar (1948).

"They included B.R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, the former Advocate-General of Madras, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, a former Dewan of Kashmir, N. Madhava Rau of the Mysore Civil Service, and K.M. Munshi, an eminent lawyer who had resigned from the Congress in 1941. Ambedkar had originally been elected to the Assembly as the member for the Scheduled Castes Federation, but lost his seat with the partition of Bengal. He was re-elected by the Bombay Congress at the request of the High Command. Another lawyer who exercised great influence over the drafting of the Constitution was B.N. Rau (a retired I.C.S. officer) who served as Constitutional Adviser. He is described by Austin (1966, 20) as a 'legalist, an eminent advocate and judge, a student of constitutional history, and an able draftsman, one of the more Europeanized intellectuals'.

¹⁰ The depoliticizing implications of granting constitutional status to a particular set of ideological norms was noted by Mahboob Ali Baig, a Muslim League member from Madras. He argued that a set of principles 'to bind and tie down political parties was contrary to the principles of parliamentary democracy (CAD: VII, 488-9).

old time constitutional lawyers believed that the scope and function of constitutional law was to prescribe the shape and form of the political structure of society, [and] never realized that it was equally essential to prescribe the shape and form of the economic structure of society, if democracy is to live up to its principle of one man, one value.¹¹

Ambedkar tried to persuade members of the sub-committee on fundamental rights to accept his detailed draft incorporating principles of state socialism and 'economic democracy'. He did not wish to

leave the fulfillment of so fundamental a purpose to the exigencies of ordinary law which simple majorities (whose political fortunes are never determined by rational causes) have a right to make and unmake.¹²

The Congress majority accepted Ambedkar's argument for expanding the scope of constitutional law, but rejected the principles he had submitted. The chosen principles were those which formed part of the profoundly contradictory ideology of the Congress, combining conservative protection of the right to property with egalitarian principles which the socialist members of the Congress wished to be part of the Constitution. The decision to make the Constitution a programmatic charter, instead of confining it to specifying the rules of business of state institutions, had major implications for the judiciary.

Apprehensions about the future of parliamentary government based on parties put the framers of the Indian Constitution in an idealist frame of mind. They hoped that useful elements from other Constitutions could be combined to give the idea of an Indian state, as distinct from the colonial state, a new positive content. The *Government of India Act of 1935* provided a convenient base to start from, but it did not contain any of the idealism that inspired the nationalist movement. It did not contain a Bill of Rights which was an important part of nationalist aspirations and demands. British style constitution-making considered a Bill of Rights unnecessary. The stability of the English Constitution encouraged a cynically realistic, and somewhat insular, attitude to declarations or definitions of rights.

The framers of the Indian Constitution, however, included new constitutional features to transform the prosaic base of the *Government of India Act of 1935* into a new charter. The purpose was not merely to specify the powers and functions of the institutions of government, but also to set the general direction for political activity in the state by specifying principles and substantive goals. Thus the Preamble, and the chapters on Fundamental Rights (Part III) and the

¹¹ See Ambedkar's note to the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights projecting his views on state socialism and economic democracy (Rao, 1966: Vol. 2, 101-2).

¹² Ambedkar in Rao, 1966, Vol. 2: 101-2.

Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) introduce into constitutional law elements which characterize what may be called a European (as distinct from Anglo-American) *idea* of the state.¹¹

In Europe there is a long-standing disposition to recognize the state as an integrating and legitimizing concept that identifies the basic values of the political community with reference to which power and authority are expected to be exercised.¹² The idea of state encompasses institutions whose purposes and actions have a prestigious character, embodying a rational commitment to a substantive notion of the public interest. A clear distinction between state and civil society is an important precondition for the 'steering' capacity of the state. The state's purpose, in the European tradition, is to give society a sense of direction, and transcend partisan 'politicking' through proper forms of political rule that establish values thought to be good for the community. Such a conception of the state has been the subject of idealist glorification by Hegel, materialist critique by Marx, and legal-positivist analysis by Kelsen, who sought to limit state power by assimilating it into law.¹³

The motivation for introducing in the Indian Constitution elements of 'stateness' came not out of historical or socio-cultural features in Indian society, but from middle-class intellectuals who were deeply suspicious of partisan politics and politicians.¹⁴ Their liberal Western

¹¹ The intellectual traditions of Britain and the United States have been strongly empiricist and pragmatic with a distinct preference for an avoidance of holistic concepts such as 'state' in favour of more empirically accessible, if partial concepts.

The continuity of medieval forms of government in Britain precluded the emergence of the state as in Europe. The Common Law lacks the clear distinction between *ius*, regulating transactions among citizens, and *lex*, regulating relations between state and citizens. English judges have not regarded themselves as servants of the state, and had no call to develop the idea of state as a legal institution or enunciated principles to govern the framing of legislation by Parliament.

It must be noted that the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution has the practical character of operative provisions, unlike the French Declaration of Rights, conceived as being outside and above the Constitution, providing principles to which the Constitution must conform. A deep distrust of bureaucracy and a preference for a power-diffusing, pluralist, system of government are distinctive American characteristics.

¹² For an excellent analysis of the state tradition in Europe, see Dyson (1980).

¹³ The *Basic Law* of the Federal Republic of Germany, for instance, is a programmatic Constitution which combines normative and descriptive elements, envisaging the state as *Rechtsstaat*, subject to law emphasizing civil liberties, and depersonalization and delimitation of power, *Sozialstaat*, a social and economic system based on social justice, and *Bundesstaat*, a state with a federal institutional structure. The realization of such a state is declared to be an *Auftrag*, a commitment binding the political community as a whole. The conception of the state in terms of constitutional law has the effect of an *Entlastung* or 'relief' for the political processes by removing many issues to the arena of law from that of politics.

¹⁴ Nettl first proposed the idea that 'stateness' may be used as a conceptual variable in

education made them intellectually conscious of the illegitimacy of colonial rule, but they were not enamoured by the strengths of indigenous democratic traditions and political practices. They admired the ideology of impersonal exercise of rational, disinterested power espoused by the Indian Civil Service. They feared the arrival of what a scholar on the Indian bureaucracy describes as 'self-seeking and half-baked politicians who were born to rule by discretion rather than law'.¹⁷ Vallabhbhai Patel, who wielded greater power in the Congress Organization than any other leader, strongly defended the civil service when some nationalist members demanded the disbandment of the I.C.S.¹⁸ It did not seem to matter that the civil service,

comparative politics. But according to him 'the continued use of the word 'state' in the context of developing countries represents a form of conceptual underdevelopment within the social sciences; far from specifically exempting such countries from the tendency to conceptually dissolve the 'state' into functionally more specific or limited structures such as civil or military bureaucracies or political parties, the literature that uses the concept does so in the 'old-fashioned' sense because it has not yet got round to applying the new terminology' (1968: 561)

As the *idea* of state had not taken root in developing countries, he noted that political models developed from their experience had emphasized parties.

Nettl surveyed the evidence from developing countries facing the problem of establishing the legitimacy of new regimes while simultaneously dissociating themselves from their colonial past. He noted, however, that a state could develop in such countries only if a politically supported regime remains in power for a considerable time and is able to transpose its own norms across the high threshold of time into a situation of stateness. However, during the phase of nationalist agitation, the Congress had succeeded in gaining political support as the alternative state, or *swadeshi sarkar*. It was able to transpose its norms through its control over the Constituent Assembly.

The references to Nettl in Rudolph and Rudolph indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of Nettl's emphasis on the *idea* of the state. They make the extraordinary claim that the 'Indian state is the residual legatee of a long tradition of high stateness that reaches back to India's ancient subcontinental empires of medieval regional kingdoms' (1987: 61, 73, 103).

In commending the use of 'stateness' as a conceptual variable, Nettl intended to draw attention to the salience of the concept in France and Germany, as compared to Britain and the United States. He did not mean that high stateness should be equated to viceregal or authoritarian rule and low stateness with more liberal rule.

¹⁷ Mishra (1977: 394) believes that the capacity of the Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.), compared to its predecessor, the I.C.S., has been seriously eroded by political interference. Hegginbotham (1976) notes that 'one of the ubiquitous themes of empirically grounded research on the political process in India is the susceptibility of the bureaucracy to the influence of politicians representing the interests of individual constituents'. See also the debate occasioned by Wood (1977) between Moore (1980: 137–48) and Wood (1980: 149–56) over the 'relative autonomy' of the civil service in the colonial and post-colonial periods. See also Potter 1989; and chapter 5 of this volume.

¹⁸ Arguing in favour of continuing the privileges of the I.C.S., Patel warned the Assembly:

primarily trained to maintain law and order and collect revenue, might not be sufficiently responsive to the development requirements of an independent country.

Unlike the European middle class which formed part of the bourgeoisie with a class base in property, the principal draftsmen of the Constitution represented an economically insecure middle class whose fortunes depended on the state. Their ideological orientation was primarily a centrist one based on constitutional legality, but unlike the propertied middle class of Europe they were unsympathetic to the traditional wealth of landlords. They preferred to have a constitutional state whose goals were a mix of liberal and socialist aspirations, hoping that political stability, economic development, and some degree of social justice would keep at bay both revolutionary programmes of the left and conservative authoritarianism of the right. The framers were more inclined to trust the judiciary and the civil service because these institutions were expected to remain aloof from politics and insulate the state from the consequences of partisan pursuit of narrow interests.¹⁹ Therefore, they conferred on the Supreme Court and the High Courts one of the widest jurisdictions in the world.

The Supreme Court of India is at the summit of a single hierarchy of courts. It is a noteworthy feature of the Constitution that it grants litigants several bases from which they may challenge actions of the state.²⁰ The scope for litigation to delay, if not altogether prevent, the implementation of policies inimical to the interests of those with sufficient capital to invest in courts is immense.

Although the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is vast, the framers also appear to have thought it would be a low-key institution which

'If you do not adopt this course then do not follow the present Constitution. Substitute something else. Put in a Congress Constitution ... This Constitution is meant to be worked by a ring of service which will keep the country intact.' [*CAD*: X, 3, 51.]

See also the discussion on neutrality and commitment, and the controversies about the civil service in Rudolph and Rudolph (1987: 74–83). For a somewhat different view based on excellent new research. see Potter, 1989.

¹⁹ Ambedkar justified the degree of detail in the Constitution, arguing that 'constitutional morality' was yet to be cultivated and democracy was 'only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic' (*CAD*: VII, 38).

²⁰ A violation of any fundamental right, for example, may be litigated in the following ways:

- (a) directly in the Supreme Court under Article 32;
- (b) directly in a High Court under Article 226;
- (c) as a collateral matter in civil or criminal proceedings in a High Court;
- (d) in the Supreme Court by following the regular appellate procedure;
- (e) or in the Supreme Court by special leave.

was not expected to contribute much to the body of political ideas, or play a major role in the political character and goals of the nation. There is little evidence that they appreciated that the role of a constitutional court would be very different from that of ordinary courts deciding private litigation between private parties.²¹

The affirmation of ideological goals and the enormous powers of the judiciary gives the Constitution a highly juristic character.²² Many political issues are given the aspect of constitutional law, with the result that realization of programmatic goals frequently calls for judicial mediation. A programmatic constitution implies that courts, when interpreting constitutional provisions, would emphasize their teleology, attending more to the 'spirit' of the Constitution than to the language of particular provisions.²³ It also leads to the possibility of the judiciary 'mandating' legislation to give effect to constitutional goals, although failure to so legislate may carry no legally enforceable sanctions.

Although the Constitution appropriates ideological space to unburden politics of the strains of establishing consensus on the goals of the state, its draftsmen did not adequately appreciate its implications for judicial interpretation. The framers were familiar only with Anglo-American styles of constitutional interpretation. They expected judges largely to follow a strict statutory construction approach to the interpretation of constitutional provisions.²⁴

²¹ Ambedkar, reflecting a narrow Common Law view of the judicial role, told the Constituent Assembly, 'the judiciary decides cases in which the Government has, if at all, the remotest interest, in fact no interest at all. The judiciary is engaged in deciding the issue between citizens and very rarely between citizens and the Government' (CAD: VIII, 259).

²² It may be said that Constitutions drafted after the Second World War have been different from their predecessors in their affirmation of human rights while contriving to make them unavailable to those opposed to constitutional democracy, and in their stress on social goals while attempting to circumscribe the implementation of those goals by a resurgence of totalitarian methods.

²³ Teleological reasoning in adjudication, like the state tradition, requires a historical, intellectual, and socio-cultural basis, so that the judiciary can elaborate on the purposive rationality of the idea of the state. But such techniques of judicial interpretation are distinctly odd from the point of view of Anglo-American positivist jurisprudence. The emphasis on the plain meaning of particular provisions restricts the scope for teleological elaboration in terms of the 'spirit' of the Constitution.

The teleological method of interpretation is evident in German constitutional law and serves as the sluice-gate for the political philosophy of judges to flow into the interpretation of the *Basic Law*. The view of the Federal Court in Germany that the *Basic Law* contains 'super-constitutional' norms which had precedence not only over legislation, but also over specific provisions of the *Basic Law* itself, is consistent only in the context of a tradition of the juristic state. Blair (1978) discusses the judicialization of politics in the Federal Republic.

²⁴ Sir Maurice Gwyer, the first Chief Justice of the Federal Court, held the view that

In response to the fears expressed by some members that a conservative judiciary might seek to curtail progressive legislative measures, the framers adopted a strategy of restricting the scope of fundamental rights with express limitations. This was regarded as an improvement over the United States Constitution where these rights are worded in absolute terms. Necessary limitations on their scope was left to the discretion of the US Supreme Court which invented the doctrine of 'police powers' of the state to abridge rights in the public interest. The Constituent Assembly was not prepared to leave it to the judiciary to determine the proper scope of limitations. They expected that Indian judges would be faithful to the text, and not recognize any limitations on fundamental rights unless they were expressed in so many words. Nor did they expect the court to recognize any further limitations over and above those expressly stated in the Constitution. Consistent with these beliefs about judicial interpretation, the initial formulation of the rights to life and property in terms of 'due process', as in the US Constitution was dropped. Many members feared that regulatory legislation in India would have the same kind of difficulties which Roosevelt's New Deal legislation faced when the US Supreme Court invalidated laws on the basis of 'substantive due process'.

The Constituent Assembly, therefore, wished to make the language of the provisions as clear and explicit as possible to avoid disputes over interpretation between the judiciary, executive, and legislature. This strategy failed because of inherent incommensurabilities in the different discourses and traditions incorporated in the Constitution.

Contradictions of constitutional liberalism

The Constitution's eclectic combination of elements borrowed from the state tradition of European constitutions and Anglo-American legal traditions has posed serious problems in working it. It envisages a state with the requisite 'steering' capacity over society to fulfil its programmatic goals. A heavy burden is placed on constitutional law and the judiciary to supply what is, in fact, a missing tradition. Familiarity with the Westminster model disposes many Indian politicians to believe that parliamentary democracy implies British-style parliamentary sovereignty. Parliamentary sovereignty is equated with 'the will of the people'.

This type of reasoning mixes up the British tradition of constitu-

judges would not be 'free to stretch or pervert the language of the enactment in the interest of any legal or constitutional theory or even for the purpose of supplying omissions or of correcting supposed errors' (Gwyer, 1939:37).

tionalism with one where a written constitution seeks to supply binding norms and substantive goals for political conduct. It further confuses a continental Rousseauistic idea of the will of the people, or the collective will, with the decisions of a parliamentary majority, rather than identify the collective will with the idea of the state.²⁵ This confusion led to constitutional crisis when the Supreme Court declared in the *Golaknath* case²⁶ that fundamental rights could not be amended by Parliament, and later in the *Kesavananda Bharathi* case,²⁷ when it held that the 'basic structure and framework' of the Constitution is unamendable. The judiciary was attacked for not recognizing that the will of the people represented by Parliament was superior to the Constitution.

It is well known that the rhetoric of agrarian reform in India was not matched by reality. Litigation over land reform put the judiciary at the centre of political controversy. On the one hand, the judiciary has been attacked for its alleged bias in favour of property rights, and for obstructing implementation of egalitarian economic legislation. On the other hand, it has been applauded for its courage and independence in upholding fundamental rights. The tendency to shift blame and responsibility for the failure of land reform reached its high point in 1975 when a state of internal Emergency was imposed by Mrs Gandhi. The suspension of fundamental rights was defended by the government with the claim, *inter alia*, that judicial review of agrarian legislation obstructed redistribution of surplus land and other egal-

²⁵ In the British tradition there is no concept of a constituent power constituting the institutions of government. As Dyson (1980, 40) notes:

'Although the constitutional formula of Crown-in-Parliament was flexible, it precluded two options: the notion that the executive power was an emanation of the state was too reminiscent of past claims of absolute monarchy, while the idea of the nation as the state, with the associated constitutional concept of the people as citizens with rights, rather than as subjects, was too radical. There was no attempt to systematize the relationship of the individual to the state. The seventeenth-century constitutional settlement was one between the distinct constituent powers of King, Lords and Commons, and it did not involve the people acting as a constituent power.'

²⁶ Supreme Court, 1967.

²⁷ Supreme Court, 1973.

²⁸ Land reform was among the twenty points in the programme of Mrs Gandhi's Emergency administration. The presumption that fundamental rights may not be compatible with economic development is widespread. Impatience with judicial processes protecting fundamental rights, the key feature of a liberal democracy, is common among the Indian élite, e.g. B.K. Nehru (1979: 57): 'The immediate task is to provide the mass of the people with bread: those finer aspects of human existence which are built on the foundations of a full stomach—and which are relevant only to those who have one—can afford to wait.' Morris-Jones (1979: 31, 42) demolishes this view by pointing out that during the Emergency it was the poor who suffered most, that despite

The few evaluations of land reform measures which have given importance to legal factors, like the many which ignore the law and focus only on economic and political factors, all assume that professed policy objectives are actually translated into legislation. This assumption overlooks problems of ascription of legislative intention. Landlords and their lawyers are accused of taking advantage of 'loopholes' in the law. But such features of enacted law, which are assumed to be technical oversights or 'loopholes', are often pointers to deliberate legislative and policy determinations.

Rather than assume that governments attempt far-reaching reforms, but fail to achieve them because of judicial obstructions, it is more accurate to assume that governments have quite different objectives which they usually succeed in achieving. There was no really significant political or ideological difference between the government and the judiciary on the question of land reforms. Both were agreed on the importance of the right to property, but the government sought to make more particularistic exceptions to that right than the judicial method would allow. The government's approach to land reforms was piecemeal, in the sense that it was interested only in some immediate objectives, taking into account certain specific facts and circumstances. Its objectives were to expropriate zamindars, and enable the state to acquire land for some specified purposes without paying full compensation. At the same time, the government did not wish to dilute the constitutional protection to the property rights of the emerging rich and middle peasant class and business groups. The judiciary's ideological proclivities were no different. However, unlike the executive, which wished to have the discretion to pick and choose those it wanted to favour with full protection of property rights, the judiciary's methods of decision-making could not sustain the particularistic exceptions to the right to property.

Litigation over land reform was pursued with full force by landlords right upto the time that the government abandoned even populist lip-service to that cause. After protracted litigation over the interpretation of numerous and clumsy amendments to the right to property, the provision was shifted only in 1978 from the chapter on fundamental rights to another part of the Constitution. In the meanwhile, however, the more resourceful 'repeat players' had the

populist rhetoric, 'landlords' and 'employers' benefited, and that the verdict of the electorate in 1977 was that freedom and bread are complementary, not competitive. He adds: 'it may be that the unconvincing cultural, economic and political arguments against liberal democracy are placed in the service of élite groups just because they now see that liberal democracy has gone too far for their own interests, just because it is becoming a weapon of the poor.'

opportunity of taking full advantage of the inherent bias in favour of the status quo in the litigation game. Power relations in the countryside could have been very different if what was done in 1978 had been done in 1951.

The *Golaknath* decision and ex-Chief Justice Subba Rao's subsequent decision to contest elections for the office of President have been seen as providing evidence of an attempt by conservatives to assert their supremacy. It is more accurate to interpret these events as manifesting the judiciary's distrust of party politics, and its belief that the kind of vigorous politicking in the post-Nehru phase of politics is antithetical to responsible political rule.

Two major enactments of Mrs Gandhi, in the course of her power struggles for supremacy within the Congress party, brought the judiciary into acute conflict with the executive. The first was the ordinance to nationalize fourteen major commercial banks. This was a popular move for which Mrs Gandhi wished to take personal credit to achieve a political *coup* against other Congressmen who were also in favour of this measure, but opposed to her leadership.

The association of the new 'radical' policy with the personality of the Prime Minister militated against the requirement of impersonality in the pursuit of state policy. The extent to which this nationalization measure was in the 'public interest', rather than in Mrs Gandhi's own political interests, is doubtful because the earlier policy of 'social control' of the banks had not been given a fair trial. The judiciary which had come to see its role as a protector of the leading values of the political community once again asserted *its* authority. In 1970, by a majority of ten to one, the Supreme Court struck down legislation to nationalize the banks.²⁹

The majority judgement opened up new avenues for challenging state action affecting fundamental rights. Although the case involved the right to property, it had important implications for the protection of such rights as that of life and liberty. This was because the Court held only those laws to be 'reasonable restrictions' of any particular right in the Constitution which did not, at the same time, seriously abridge any other rights.

The *Bank Nationalization* decision made it more imperative for Mrs Gandhi to consolidate power by implementing another radical and popular measure with high symbolic significance. This was the abolition of the constitutionally guaranteed Privy Purses, and other privileges, of Rulers of the Indian States which had not become part of British India. This guarantee was part of the compact for their accession to the Indian Union. The guarantees given to former Rulers

²⁹ Supreme Court, 1970.

could be abolished only by a two-thirds majority in Parliament, which Mrs Gandhi did not command. The amendment bill failed to secure the necessary support by a single vote. Mrs Gandhi next persuaded the President to 'de-recognize' the former rulers through a 'midnight' decree after her parliamentary defeat.

The tension between two faces of politics, one as a *proper* form of political rule, and the other as an activity primarily based on partisan interest and advantage was clearly evident in Mrs Gandhi's action. The Government's appeal to popular sentiment overriding the institution of parliament raised the important question of the limits of *raison d'état* and the importance of institutional checks on its abuse. Although the Supreme Court could have plausibly claimed that it did not have jurisdiction in this matter, it was bold enough to declare the executive order unconstitutional by a majority of nine-to-two.¹⁰

The claim of the Government that the abolition of privy purses was an act of state was rejected. The Court held that the former rulers were now citizens of India with constitutional rights, and that neither the paramountcy of the Grand Moghul who could give or take away rank and privilege at will, nor the paramountcy of the British Crown had been inherited by the political executive. Chief Justice Hidayatullah, who later became the Vice-President of India, simply said that 'brazen-faced autocracy no longer survived the enactment of the Constitution'. Unfortunately, the Court was not capable of persuasively elaborating on its implicit theme of constitutional principles which provide the foundations for a proper kind of political rule. It was unable to shake off its legalistic stance and obsession with the language of constitutional provisions. It remained vulnerable to the attack that it was bent on obstructing desirable social reforms, and its groping towards an 'idea of state' respecting constitutional norms was not appreciated.

Mrs Gandhi's defeat in the *Privy Purses* case forced her to dissolve Parliament mid-term and seek a fresh mandate on a platform which claimed that constitutional remedies and amendments are necessary to overcome impediments in the path of social justice. During the election campaign the Congress called for a 'committed' judiciary which would give priority to egalitarian dimensions of the Directive Principles of State Policy in preference to Fundamental Rights of individuals. The expression 'committed' was ambiguous and ominous.

In the absence of any tradition of the state stressing the impersonality of public power, the Prime Minister was able to project herself as the only leader 'committed' to popular socialism, and it was understood that 'committed Congressmen' meant those who were absolutely

¹⁰ Supreme Court, 1971.

and fanatically loyal to her. The campaign was not carried out in terms of 'commitment to the Constitution'. If anything, it stressed that the Constitution was in need of radical change. Having had little success in bringing social and economic reality into line with the programmatic vision in the Constitution, the Congress began to be disenchanted with the Constitution. It promoted the very antithesis of the state idea by creating a personality cult. The failure of the Indian National Congress to give substance to the idea of the state as a legitimating concept finally culminated in a personality cult where 'Indira was India and India was Indira'. The process began with the denigration of the judiciary in the 1971 campaign.

The ambiguities in Indian constitutional discourse, however, made it difficult for the Supreme Court to articulate a clear basis for its momentous decision in the *Kesavananda Bharathi* case. Seven of the thirteen judges on the Bench held that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution did not extend to altering its 'basic structure and framework'. The eleven judgements written in this case are full of ambiguities and equivocations arising from the attempt to reconcile, on the one hand, the British view that Parliament must be trusted, with the programmatic nature of the Constitution which betrayed distrust of party politics and doubted the legislature's capacity to transcend personal and partisan interests. The Court could not resist the argument that the *telos* of the Constitution was to resist arbitrary power and secure a 'limited government'. But Mrs Gandhi's appropriation of the mantle of commitment to social justice made it difficult for the Court to argue convincingly that the interests of a regime and the mission of a constitutional state were two different things.

The Court's task was made more difficult by the schizophrenic conception of the citizen, as one kind of political agent and a different kind of social agent, that is inherent in constitutional liberalism. This poses acute practical difficulties in Indian constitutional law which combines liberalism with socialism, and requires the judiciary to adjudicate concrete cases where these ideologies conflict. It is evident that the detailed and ideologically programmatic nature of the Constitution, combined with the vast jurisdiction granted to courts, has resulted in the judicialization of many political issues. In turn this has resulted in attempts to politicize the judiciary.

When the state is conceptualized as an organization, these developments have significant implications for the unity of the state machinery and its effectiveness in achieving its goals. When the state is conceptualized as an arena of conflict (between interest groups, in pluralist political science and classes in Marxist political economy), the judiciary becomes an important site for such conflicts. The vastness of judicial power in India heightens problems of judicial

accountability and responsibility. Apart from problems generated by institutional trespass into the territory of other agencies of the state, the judiciary also risks an organizational crisis of overload.

Federalism and consequences of Congress dominance

The constitutional state that came into existence in 1950, as we have seen, could not escape the condition of juristic dependence inherent in its colonial lineage and the context in which the Constitution was drafted.

The concept of federalism entertained by the framers of the Constitution grew out of the narrow perspective of accommodating the claims of the Muslim League prior to independence and partition of the country in 1947. The *Objectives Resolution* moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 envisaged a

Republic of India wherein the various territories would possess and retain the status of autonomous units together with residuary powers, and exercise all powers and functions of Government and administration.

This resolve was abandoned when Lord Mountbatten announced the partition of India and Pakistan on 3 June 1947, against the wishes of Gandhi and with the agreement of Nehru and Patel.

The first report of the Union Powers Committee submitted to the Assembly in April 1947 had proposed something in the nature of a confederation. After Partition was announced it was shelved, and the second report of this committee concluded that 'it would be injurious to the interests of the country to provide for a weak central authority'. India eventually became a 'Union of States', and the greater part of taxation and legislative authority was entrusted to the Central Government. Long-standing Congress policy to vest residual legislative powers in the States was forgotten. The Union Parliament was given the power to alter the boundaries of States by a simple majority without necessarily obtaining the consent of the States concerned. The reorganization of States on linguistic lines in 1956 re-kindled sub-nationalistic or regional consciousness in many parts of India. The demands for changes in the Constitution which would give greater autonomy and more powers to the States have been rejected on the ground that the 'unity and integrity' of India would be undermined.

The extent to which the ideas of the colonizer captured the consciousness of the colonized is most evident in the Emergency provisions in the Constitution. The *Government of India Act of 1935* (Section 93) granted Governors powers to take over provincial

governments with the exception of powers vested in the High Courts. The Governor's action required the concurrence of the Governor-General, and the period of take-over under any one such emergency proclamation was limited to three years. The colonial government apparently thought that these extraordinary powers would not be needed in independent India and so omitted them when the *Act of 1935* was revised by the *Indian (Provisional Constitution) Order of 1947*. Yet, they were reintroduced in the Constitution in the form of provisions for President's Rule (Article 356) with ominous consequences for the functioning of federalism in India. The Constitution thus mimics the colonial state where the centre controlled the periphery.

The first use of Article 356 occurred as early as May 1951. G.C. Bhargava, the Chief Minister of P.E.P.S.U., was directed by the Congress High Command to reconstitute his cabinet. When he refused, the High Command insisted on his resignation and the State was placed under President's Rule. In 1959 the Communist-led ministry in Kerala was dismissed under Article 356. That government had passed a Bill to extend state control over private educational institutions run by a powerful minority of Christians. The Kerala Students Union (KSU), consisting in the main of Congress supporters, clashed with Communist cadres. The State was reduced to turmoil. The assessment of Indira Gandhi, the Congress President, prevailed over such hesitation that Prime Minister Nehru may have had, and Article 356 was invoked. An important consequence of this development was the watering down of the *Kerala Agrarian Relations Act* by a subsequent Congress government in 1964.

Nehru's death in 1964 shifted control over the High Command to a collective of State-level leaders known as the Syndicate. The Syndicate contrived to put Morarji Desai out of the running for the office of Prime Minister under the 'Kamaraj plan'. Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeded Nehru and the State governments began a quiet retreat from Nehru's emphasis on land reform. Shastri consolidated power by instituting a series of investigations into allegations of corruption routinely levelled against Union Ministers and State Chief Ministers. Pratap Singh Kairon in Punjab, vulnerable without Nehru, was found guilty and sacked.

Interestingly, no inquiry was ordered in the case of R. Shankar, the Congress Chief Minister in Kerala, and protégé of Kamaraj. However, the Congress was defeated in a no-confidence motion when the Kerala Congress broke away and the State was again brought under President's Rule. In 1965 when the CPI(M) emerged as the largest party in the State Assembly, no opportunity was given to it to build a coalition with former associates who had split in December 1964, and President's Rule was reimposed. Shastri's sudden death produced a

power vacuum at the Centre, and Mrs Gandhi was elected with the support of Kamaraj who believed that she would be too weak as Prime Minister to override the Syndicate.

The Communist parties launched an onslaught on the Constitution, especially the provisions for President's rule. The emergency powers under the *Defence of India Rules* had hit them hard and they wanted to restrict emergency powers to circumstances of foreign invasion. They endorsed extra-constitutional acts to force the changes they favoured. At the other end of the ideological spectrum, defectors from the Congress, together with the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party, formed an electoral alliance. All opposition parties, irrespective of ideological orientation, sought the defeat of the Congress.

The 1967 elections proved to be a debacle for the Congress. Between March 1967 and March 1970, according to one estimate, there were 1,827 defections compared to 3,487 seats in all the State Assemblies. The proportion is higher if the Congress strongholds of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh at that time are excluded. President's Rule became the order of the day. In 1969 six States, including Bihar after a mid-term poll, were brought under President's Rule.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and the Syndicate were battling for power in the Congress High Command. Younger, radical members of the Party, some with former communist and socialist associations, rallied around Mrs Gandhi to isolate the old bosses as ideologically reactionary. The Syndicate was reduced to strategically securing a place for Morarji Desai in the Union Cabinet in an effort to counter Mrs Gandhi's bid for supreme authority. For his part, Morarji Desai, doubtless bemused by the turn of events, joined the Syndicate. After a series of dramatic events, including the victory of V.V. Giri, Mrs Gandhi's 'conscience candidate' in the election of the President of the Republic, the Congress split in November 1969. State governments again began to fall apart. Kamaraj's calculations had clearly gone awry as Mrs Gandhi dared to split the party to seize control over it.

Mrs Gandhi's spectacular victory in the 1971 elections marks a watershed in Indian politics. The Prime Minister became completely independent of all other leaders in her party. But her pre-eminence could not produce an organization capable of carrying out the policies of socialist transformation which she had promised. The Prime Minister exercised unbridled power to nominate and remove at will State Chief Ministers and party officials. There could now be no local foundations for stability and the appearance of order in the polity had to be maintained by *de facto*, if not *de jure*, President's Rule.

Administrative resources for the centralized governance were created by placing under the Prime Minister's control (through the

Cabinet Secretariat), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Intelligence Bureau (IB), and the intelligence clearing house in the form of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and the many paramilitary forces. In May 1971, the President promulgated the *Maintenance of Internal Security Ordinance* (later MISA), giving powers to the central government, and by appropriate directions, to State governments, to detain persons for up to a year at a time. These resources were deployed in West Bengal to neutralize the CPI (M), the only opposition party in 1971 to increase its share of the popular vote and the number of seats it held. When the Congress Government resigned after being unable to cope with the problems posed by refugees fleeing the Pakistani army in the east, the State was put under President's Rule, without giving the United Left Front an opportunity to form a government. Sidhartha Shankar Ray, Union Minister Without Portfolio, was authorized to exercise powers of 'superintendence, control and direction' over West Bengal. This was President's Rule with a vengeance.

In the March 1972 elections to legislatures in 16 States, Mrs Gandhi's promise to abolish poverty once again lured the electorate. The Congress secured an overwhelming majority in all States except Manipur and Meghalaya. However, the organizational bankruptcy of the Congress and its structural incapacity to redeem its promises rendered all State governments vulnerable. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, was sacked by Mrs Gandhi in January 1973, in the wake of the agitations caused by the Supreme Court's decision upholding the validity of the *Mulki* rules (dating back to 1919 in the Nizam's Province), reserving certain government posts for residents of the Telangana region. President's Rule was imposed. In March 1973, Orissa was also brought under President's Rule, followed by Manipur and Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister decided to retaliate against the Supreme Court's decision in *Kesavananda Bharathi*, which struck down constitutional amendments restricting judicial review. Mrs Gandhi overlooked the principle of seniority in the appointment of the Chief Justice of India, and superseded three judges who did not subscribe to the Government's view on parliamentary sovereignty. Jayaprakash Narayan, an exemplar of the 'saintly idiom' in Indian politics (*a la* Morris-Jones, 1963) wrote to Mrs Gandhi in May 1973 appealing to her not to undermine constitutional safeguards against the abrogation of fundamental rights and the principle of judicial independence. This was the first penetrating salvo which resulted in a serious reconsideration in many diverse quarters in the political arena of the importance of the Constitution and the nature of judicial discourse.

The imposition of President's Rule in Gujarat in March 1974, and

promise of elections in that State in June 1975, was the turning point which signified the political weakness of the Central Government despite its vast arsenal of executive and extra-constitutional powers. The electorate was not swayed by Mrs Gandhi's attempt to project herself as the 'daughter-in-law' of Gujarat. As news of her debacle was flowing in, the Allahabad High Court delivered a stunning blow by disqualifying Mrs Gandhi's own election to Parliament on grounds of corrupt practice, disabling her from holding any elective office for a period of six years. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer refused to absolutely stay the Allahabad order, but gratuitously permitted Mrs Gandhi to continue as Prime Minister without the right to vote in Parliament. Several opposition parties joined Jayaprakash Narayan to create a Committee for Struggle to oust Mrs Gandhi from power.

The methods perfected by the Viceroys of British India to hold down Mahatma Gandhi were deployed by Mrs Gandhi in the early hours of 26 June 1975, and a State of Emergency on grounds of 'internal disturbance' was proclaimed. The federal provisions of the Constitution and fundamental rights were suspended. If political maturity means anything at all, it means that such risks as the country faced in the event of Mrs Gandhi's resignation were worth taking, and indeed, must be taken. Yet Mrs Gandhi concluded that the greatest danger lay in the freedom of the press. The Government was already armed with powers of preventive detention, and had accumulated long experience in using them. But censorship of the press had no legal sanction. Therefore, Mrs Gandhi was advised by her coterie to invoke Article 352 of the Constitution, the reincarnation of Section 45 of the *Government of India Act of 1935*, to establish a 'constitutional dictatorship'. This decision was taken without consulting either the Cabinet or senior officials. It was the very antithesis of the 'reason of state' rationale of the Constitution's Emergency powers.

In an atmosphere of fear, the Supreme Court creditably set aside a constitutional amendment that purported to remove its jurisdiction to hear Mrs Gandhi's election appeal. But its assertion of judicial supremacy over claims of parliamentary sovereignty was toothless. It upheld Mrs Gandhi's legal case on the basis of retrospectively amended election laws.¹¹ Subsequently, the Supreme Court upheld the suspension of *habeas corpus*.¹²

It is not possible to judge the moral worthiness of the decisions of judges and other officials charged with the administration of repugnant laws without an appreciation of the contingencies in which they acted, and in the absence of yardsticks for measuring the virtue

¹¹ Supreme Court, 1975.

¹² Supreme Court, 1976.

of courage and the vice of recklessness. Many officials acted arbitrarily, even in excess of the harsh emergency laws. The legal and, *a fortiori*, the moral wrong of such excesses is obvious. It is a more difficult question to determine whether or not the Emergency itself was in excess of what is constitutionally permissible. On the basis of our understanding of the politics of India, and its history of resistance to imperial rule, we can, *qua* historians, hold those Emergency laws and regulations to be unjust. Likewise, taking into account social, political, economic, cultural, and other factors, we may arguably conclude that most impositions of President's Rule in India were unwarranted. We may venture to predict that legalized continuance of undefined discretionary authority of the executive will result in civil war. At the same time, our knowledge of judicial discourse should inform us that it is not desirable to smudge the positivity of law by denying legal obligatoriness, in an intrasystemic sense, of rules which only the other day had been affirmed by previous judicial decisions as legally valid and obligatory.

However, even if we hold that the *Habeas Corpus* case can be legally justified, it does not mean that such a decision was the only possible one in judicial discourse. Practical reasonableness and appropriateness for the common good and justice can give authority to judicial decisions other than the usual ones of precedent and settled usage. It is possible for a rule that is valid according to the legal system's formal criteria of validity to be judged to be, or to have become, unjust and, therefore, inapplicable. Judges, and to a lesser extent, citizens, can have a moral obligation to obey an unjust law *as if* it was just in order to protect the beneficial consequences of the rule of law in general. This was recognized by Gandhi who expected his followers in civil disobedience to subject themselves to all the legal consequences of disobedience, and thus distinguish their respect for the rule of law from their objections to bad laws. In the context of the 1975 Emergency, judges and officials could not have reasonably revolted and refused to carry out their lawful functions because to have done so would have brought the entire constitutional edifice into disrepute.

The absence of popular protest, rather than fears over the acquiescence of the judiciary, may have encouraged Mrs Gandhi to legitimize her authority through general elections. Or it could have been the fear that the repression of popular energy could explode before long with uncontrollable force. Evidently, constitutional norms (for which Sanjay Gandhi had scant respect) weighed sufficiently with Mrs Gandhi to seek the endorsement of the electorate for her actions and her programme for the country. She had already made far-reaching

institutional changes in government, and the *Forty-Second Amendment* to the Constitution routinized many of the emergency powers.¹¹ Among the changes was the provision to reverse the legal superiority given by the Supreme Court to fundamental rights over the directive principles of state policy. In order to overturn the *Kesavananda* decision, the amendment declared that there shall be no limitation on 'the constituent power of parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of the Constitution'. The power of judicial review over constitutional amendments claimed by the Supreme Court was nullified by this amendment passed by an 'elective dictatorship' in a Parliament permeated by fear. The central government was further armed with the power to deploy the army in any State regardless of the wishes of the concerned State government.

While the central government assumed concurrent powers of legislation over the administration of justice and all courts, education, forests, and population control, it significantly did not take concurrent powers over land and agriculture, and agricultural taxation. This is especially notable because the Committee (known as the Swaran Singh Committee) appointed to recommend desirable amendments advised the inclusion of agriculture in the concurrent list of the Constitution. The power of landlords remained undiminished even during the phase of 'constitutional dictatorship' and this salutary recommendation was not accepted.

Mrs Gandhi's constitutional amendments, on the whole, were thoroughly derogatory of judicial values and sought to undermine the whole basis of constitutional discourse which the courts had, however clumsily, developed. So Jayaprakash Narayan posed the choices before the people as being between 'democracy or dictatorship, slavery or freedom'. In the 1977 elections Mrs Gandhi reckoned on a higher premium for fear than was worthy of a street-wise and experienced, even if largely illiterate, electorate. The people, for their part, vindicated the moral essence of a constitutional order. They rejected the view that liberty was a threat to the security of the state. They upheld the view that civil liberties are implicit in the goal of survival. As befits citizens of a constitutional polity, they suffered obedience of unjust laws for the sake of that order, and in 1977 appropriately rejected them through constitutional means.

This lesson in constitutional morality moved politicians for a few euphoric months. While many of the repugnant amendments were repealed, the pledge that the *Forty-Second Amendment* would be entirely repealed was not kept, however. Some additional safeguard in

¹¹ This 1976 amendment substantially altered the character of the Constitution. The Janata regime subsequently succeeded in repealing some of its most repugnant provisions.

the use of emergency powers were introduced. By deleting the provision ousting judicial review of the proclamation of emergency, the possibility of judicial inquiry into the *mala fide* issue was kept open.

The Supreme Court also learnt a few lessons and sought to refurbish its damaged image with a new activism. It championed the rights of those who have always been mere subjects of the state, prevented from claiming the privileges of full citizenship. The success of the Court's attempt to open its doors to new constituencies, and its efforts to curb the lawlessness of Government and enhance public accountability, greatly depends on the strength of social action movements which have produced a new consciousness of the problems and struggle for the survival of the poor. The Press has played some part in this process by increasing the accessibility of information about those the Indian élite would prefer to regard as invisible.

The cases brought to the Court by social action groups, described as public interest litigation by judges, are not easily resolved. There are problems of evidence and greater difficulties devising appropriate judicial remedies. They call for vast judicial excursions into the territory of the executive, and there is little indication that other agencies of the state are inspired by the judiciary's new found mission. It is clear that one cannot be overly optimistic that judicial interventions by some well-meaning judges are going to make a great difference to the deeply entrenched structures of inequity and exploitation in the country.

The continuing politicization of judicial appointments, the transfer of judges without their consent, and the vigorous opposition of lawyers representing the wealthy, who fear that the new litigation will further bloat the already unmanageable docket of the judiciary, all suggest that too much faith cannot be placed on the reorientation of one arm of the state. The most that can be said is that these developments have opened up a new arena of struggle for those whose survival is threatened.

The other moral lesson of the Emergency experience is that nothing can improve on free elections as an instrument for overcoming political crisis and preserving the constitutional order. But the necessity of ensuring restraint in the exercise of President's Rule in order to foster local democracy has not been sufficiently appreciated. No attempt has been made to introduce greater precision in the vague formulation that the President may act on being 'satisfied' that the government of a State cannot be carried on 'according to the provisions of the Constitution'. But it is clear that the consequence of the expedient use of President's Rule has been to procure the bankruptcy of local political organizations, rendering it impossible to implement policies promised to the electorate.

When the Janata Government sought to remove Congress governments in the States, the Supreme Court did not substantively examine the issue of constitutional propriety.¹¹ It echoed the view of the middle-class élite that federalism has to be watered down in order to ensure progress and development and to secure national integration. This was the reasoning that led to the constitutional provisions being what they were when first drafted, and nothing was really learned from experience. Ironically, frequent use of President's Rule has engendered endemic instability in the States. In turn, instability so fostered is used as a justification for both the continuation of the political practice, and preservation of the constitutional rules which permit President's Rule. The rules by themselves do not require this to be so.

The Supreme Court's decision in the *Dissolution Case*, upholding the dismissal of State governments with a working majority, and the dismissal of their legislatures, has evoked sympathy and support from those scholars who are sensitive to the political predicament which the case posed. Baxi (1980: 134–5) concluded that it was bad politics on the part of the States to involve the Supreme Court in this matter, and 'good politics' for the Court to have decided the way it did, from the point of view of its 'own legitimacy'. The practical reasoning of the Court, deciding in an atmosphere of freedom rather than fear, has unhappy consequences for the survival of constitutionalism presupposed by federalism. The decision displayed the virtue of prudence to the good of judges *qua* judges; what was needed, and would have been admirable, was courage in the defence of the constitutional order.

It is not surprising, however, that after the collapse of the Janata government in 1980, the Congress government promptly dismissed non-Congress governments in nine States. In 1983 the government appointed a *Commission on Centre–State Relations* (known as the Sarkaria Commission). In its report, published four years later, the Commission endorsed the Constitution's present emphasis on a 'strong Centre'. It did however venture beyond its terms of reference to discuss decentralization and local government in India. It noted that there was a pervasive trend towards greater centralization resulting in 'blood pressure at the Centre and anaemia at the periphery'.¹² It recommended uniform legal provisions to ensure regular elections to panchayats and avoid their frequent suppression by State governments. It recommended that the Inter-State Council (which the Constitution had already provided) should be activated, and used to reach a consensus among States on critical issues of federalism and decentralization. Although the Inter-State Council is

¹¹ Supreme Court, 1977.

¹² Government of India, 1988, Pt. 1, pp. 543–5.

now formally in existence, it appears to have no other function except to give employment to senior bureaucrats currently out of favour.

India's federal structure finds it increasingly difficult to accommodate the growing consciousness of cultural-linguistic identities. The system has made room for heterogeneous Congress and Janata parties at the national level, and less heterogeneous parties in the States. But the continued erosion of State autonomy through central control over the legislative authority of the States and their leadership has diminished their capacity to contain a variety of social conflicts. The judiciary may again have to provide 'relief' to an impotent political process by converting into constitutional discourse critical issues that are best handled in terms of political discourse. This is a legacy of the very nature of the Indian Constitution. At the same time, the judiciary is ill-equipped to handle grave problems arising out of the assertion of 'Hindu nationalism' and Muslim 'fundamentalism', or the claims of Other Backward Classes for employment quotas, or, for that matter, inter-State riparian disputes.

Unfortunately, the terms of political discourse to grapple with these basic political issues have been corrupted, first by colonial practices, and later by the Congress culture. Even though we may praise India's Constitution for having survived several crises, it still remains, in substantial measure, a Constitution fashioned by the colonizer and the Congress. Independence, and several relatively free democratic elections, have failed to give India's political leadership the maturity to be self-conscious about the moral content of a constitutional order. Nor have they made much difference to the intensity of poverty and exploitation in the country. The 'people of India' can truly give themselves a Constitution suited to their 'genius', and rid it of its unfortunate legacies only in the course of prolonged political and democratic struggles.

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The Indian State and Patriarchy • 3

APARNA MAHANTA

The state structure

Representing as it does the highest form of social organization, and embodying in varied proportions the interests of all sections of society, the state appears to be inevitable. In the liberal tradition, it plays a mediating role, accommodating the various conflicts of interests. The Marxist tradition envisages a more active role for the state, either as an instrument of class oppression (whereby a dominant class, through force and ideological manipulation, subordinates the other classes and subsumes their interests in its own), or as a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', organizing the transition to a non-exploitative and classless society (which presumably would have no use for the state).

In modern conceptions of the welfare state and of social democratic regimes, the interventionist role of the state is emphasized as the agent of social change, leading to a more just and equitable society, with the percolation of social benefits to all. The modern Indian state draws on both liberal-democratic and Marxist-socialist traditions in setting a political agenda to incorporate a wide sweep of democratic, secular, and socialist principles. The self-perception of the Indian

state as a modern or, more specifically, 'modernizing' state is being constantly tempered by its need to be perceived as a traditional society. A line of 'modernizing' Prime Ministers explains the gap between the state's grandiose professions and its actual practice in blithe phrases such as, 'Law is one thing, tradition another' (Gandhi, 1971: 41).

The nature of the Indian state is determined by this apparent disjunction / complicity of two systems (following different methods but working to similar purpose), speaking as it were in the multiplicity of political languages (Morris-Jones, 1971: 277), but duplicating the same patterns of economic exploitation and social oppression.

This collusion of the modern and the traditional language of politics provides the logical point of departure for a critique of gender relations. The theory of patriarchy posits that in all systems of oppression/exploitation, gender oppression is primary. Patriarchal institutions in all societies, traditional or modern, pre-capitalist or capitalist, are built upon the manipulation of sex/gender roles. They rationalize and legitimize the suppression and exploitation not only of women by men but also, as a proponent of patriarchy puts it, 'of other categories of people and of nature' (Mies, 1986: 13). Economic/political categories, such as caste and class, and systems such as capitalism, imperialism, or colonialism are, ultimately, manifestations of the same patriarchal modes. They are based upon both sex and race, with one reinforcing the other. Thus, the Indian state, asserting its sovereignty and independence *vis-à-vis* the international community, is constantly being pressurized by the forces of imperialism under the guise of international interests, through institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Despite its commitment to human rights and social justice, the Indian state is colluding, in the name of national interest, with patriarchal forces to deny human rights and social justice to traditionally disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, Backward and Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and religious and ethnic minorities).

The gender aspect of the official discourse of modern India is to a large extent structured by the way it entered into the nationalist discourse in the pre-independence period. Gender was an important element in the transitional stage from the colonial to the nationalist discourse. The imperialist image of the Hindu woman as the victim of barbarous practices (such as sati, child marriage, and purdah), who needed to be rescued by the chivalrous and liberal/enlightened British rule, became the symbolic representative of traditional Indian values. The values were incorporated in the image of the chaste and valiant wife/mother—Sita, Draupadi, Damayanti, Taravati (all heroines of ancient Indian mythology and tradition)—whose sufferings

are sublimated as self-sacrifice and patience. At the same time, the honour of Indian women had to be protected against symbolic rape—that is the plunder and despoiling of the Indian heritage by the British. The alien rulers were perceived as deliberately attempting to distort those noble traditions which protected the purity and chastity of Indian women.

Moreover, many nineteenth century social reformers believed that the colonial power, like other invaders of the past, was directly responsible for the deterioration in the condition of Hindu women. For, they argued, retrograde customs such as purdah and sati were means by which a conservative society (such as the Hindu society) sought to protect itself from external influences. The unnatural seclusion of Hindu women under purdah in the colonial perception was countered by the Gandhian image of the home-loving Indian women whose khadi emphasized her modesty (as the bark of trees had acted as Sita's garment in the forest), and whose natural habitat was the home where she was queen (Joshi, 1988).

Gandhi's role in incorporating the gender element into the nationalist discourse was simultaneously to empower Indian women to participate in the freedom struggle and to reinforce the patriarchalist assumptions of women's nature and role (Kishwar, 1985; Patel, 1988).

At the same time, however, the overall 'modernist' context of the freedom movement as a struggle for national independence, and the creation of a democratic and secular state, carried an appeal for the liberationist aspirations of women bound down by family and social bondage. Gandhian ideology provided the moral legitimacy for the women's cause (Kishwar, 1985: 1757). This was true not only for the rural uneducated women who belonged to Gandhi's 'constituency', but also for the small section of educated women who were organizing under the auspices of independent women's organizations (such as the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) founded in 1927, the Indian Women's Association (IWA) (1917-37), and the National Council of Women in India (NCWI) (1925)). These groups followed the Congress model of democratic organizations with regular conferences and elected office-bearers, and advocated women's rights to franchise, educational opportunities, and social reform, including such radical options as abortion (Sharma, 1981: 114, 121). But the Gandhian ideology, enshrining the image of the docile, submissive Indian woman, served to contain the more radical aspirations of the small section of educated women which had joined in the movement. The way was thus prepared for the co-option of the more articulate women leaders of the nationalist movement through a system of patronized entry, providing for a token presence.

Among the powerful myths generated in the course of the freedom

struggle, none was more effective than that of women's participation. The connotation, however, of self-defined and self-directed participation is true only for the small number of Indian women who joined the independence movement under the banner of women's organizations. They did enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, despite being controlled by the wives, daughters, and close associates of the nationalist leaders. And it would be true to say that a large number of women, particularly rural women, were mobilized; that is, drawn into the struggle through a predetermined programme under the charismatic and paternalistic leadership of Gandhi. Nevertheless, the politically-conscious and articulate women leaders—both in Congress and in women's organizations—failed to alter significantly the terms that governed the status of women in the new state.

The explanation of the ease with which women were co-opted after Independence lies in the failure of the politically-conscious among them to mobilize the mass of Indian women on an autonomous platform. Although these women were themselves attuned to progressive goals in political life, their autonomy was severely compromised by the fact that they continued to be entwined in the traditional structures of caste and family connections.

The devi and the dasi: Indian patriarchy in the Nehru era

The yawning gap between the stated commitment to democratic institutions and fundamental legal rights (including freedom from discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, etc.), and the deep structural inequalities rooted in traditional society, can be fruitfully explored through the issue of gender. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to women, and acknowledges the special disabilities suffered by them, along with children and 'other socially and educationally backward classes of citizens such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs)'. What is evident is that the state *does not acknowledge* any moral responsibility for the grave social injustices perpetrated by the traditional oppression of women and the perpetuation of the caste system. It ignores the wider issues of social exploitation inherent in the patriarchal mode of society, and perceives the low status of women, along with that of other backward sections, as a consequence of 'social disabilities' arising out of a situation of 'backwardness' and 'weakness'.

The notion that women constitute the weaker sex (due to their child-bearing role) is a familiar aspect of patriarchal ideology, and is used to assign women to subordinate roles in the social structure. Women's

perceived helplessness is regarded as sufficient justification for making 'special provisions' for them. In the case of the STs and SCs, and other culturally and educationally 'backward' classes (such as the religious and ethnic minorities) it is the same factor, i.e. social disability or weakness, that puts them at a disadvantage; and it needs to be remedied by means of a special provision.

Biological facts such as racial characteristics and sex differentiation are drawn upon selectively as a basis for discriminatory practices. The sexual division of labour (like the division of labour in general), enhances such differences, which become the justification for patriarchal domination of women. On the one hand, women, due to their biological role as reproducers (and certain categories of men, due to their association with manual labour) are seen as being within the realm of 'nature'. On the other, the more complex processes of social production, based on the division of mental and physical labour, are associated with 'culture'. This is the so-called nature/culture divide, referred to in Ortner's well-known formulation that 'female is to male as nature is to culture' (quoted in Hartmann, 1975: 177). It provides the rationale for social stratification and hierarchization among those groups that are perceived as culturally advanced or developed and those that are deemed to be primitive or culturally backward and underdeveloped. Concepts such as 'Sanskritization' or 'Aryanization' (with the premise of a vertical movement up or down and implied valorization) can only help to perpetuate such divisions.

Women, like the STs and SCs (and untouchables) are consigned to 'nature' on the basis of their reproductive role, connection with primitive agriculture, 'natural' production, and 'primitive' kin system with its emphasis on 'blood-relationships'. These characteristics hinder their advance on the 'culture' scale, hence their 'backwardness'. The trope of 'backwardness', used in the sense of 'natural' inferiority, runs through the state's perception of these particular sections of society and governs the policies enacted on their behalf. Thus, despite the universalist assumptions underlying the category 'citizen of India', the structuralist inequalities interwoven into the fabric of society condemns women, along with other 'backward' groups, to a second category or class of citizens in need of special protection. Though termed an *enabling* provision, Articles 15(3) and 15(4) essentially operate as prescriptive norms ensuring the continuation of structural inequalities, rather than working towards their removal. More than forty years of a reservation policy for SCs and STs has contributed significantly little to alter the status quo.

One of the basic techniques used by patriarchy for the subordination of women and their marginalization in the state process is through the separation of the family or sphere of domestic production

from that of social production and the state system, though in practice they are intimately connected. Side by side, there is a simultaneous hierarchization and valorization of one over the other—'culture' over 'nature', the 'public' over the 'private'. With the increase in population, the creation of new needs, and the development of new social relationships to supply these needs, the family, previously the only social relationship, becomes a 'subordinate' one (Marx and Engels, 1969: 31).

The primitive division of labour in tribal society between men's and women's work, which was 'originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act', is considered spontaneous or natural, by virtue of its basis in 'natural predisposition [e.g. physical strength], needs, accidents, etc.' (Marx and Engels, 1969: 31.) The *real* division, which is the basis of social production, is considered as occurring with the division of material and mental labour. The Marxist analysis of patriarchy thus draws attention to the subordination of the 'natural', 'personal' sphere of reproduction and the material processes directly linked to the 'public', 'artificial' sphere of social production and the state system supporting it. By becoming a subordinate unit, the contribution of the family, which had been originally considered as primary, is subsumed under the general category of social production as contributing only one element, namely the reproduction of labour power. Woman, in Engels's language, becomes 'the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children' (Engels, 1977: 57). Her role is envisaged as that of wife and mother alone, providing private services, rather than as a social producer providing public services to the state and society.

However, this devaluation of women's reproductive labour and their labour power in agricultural production (along with the labour of slaves, serfs, and plebians—i.e. the servile classes) stood in contrast to the recognition given to it as constituting a material part of the early state systems.

Bone Dea is the material nature principle that generates and nourishes all material life and promotes the material well-being of the people. Thus she was the material foundation of the state's welfare; it was through their bond with her that praetor and consul represented the material side of the nation's existence and administered justice. [Bachofen, 1973: 198.]

Thus the real subjugation of women, and also of the labouring classes, is sublimated by the deification of the 'ideal', often in the composite image of the 'mother' and her 'family'. Chattopadhyaya suggests that

the survival of the primaeval mother in the consciousness of the Indian masses can only be explained by the survival of its material basis [i.e. its primitive agricultural economy] [1959: 266].

In the same way, the survival of the Ganesh cult harks back to the tribal past ('*gan*' meaning the tribe), particularly in association with the 'mother' cult. Lokamanya Tilak popularized the Ganesh festival in the early years of this century in order to symbolize 'people's power'. Populist leaders in different parts of India are now reviving the cult (without its original name) in a new populist political context. In the case of woman it is 'shakti' that is invoked, highlighting the *devn/dasi* opposition.

This dualistic view of women as simultaneously embodying the banal and the glorious runs through the 'modernist' state rhetoric. In her first speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort after assuming office as Prime Minister (1966), Indira Gandhi appealed to the women of India to

carry the responsibility of running the home, of bringing up the new generation, of braving the difficulties arising from spiralling prices..... Women constitute 50 per cent of the country's population. For centuries, they have imparted strength to the nation. For centuries they have upheld the noble traditions of India. We look to them again to maintain the high traditions of our culture. They continue to be the source of the nation's strength. We look to them for inspiration. [1971: 12.]

The '50 per cent' is the give-away statistic in the *hull* of the rhetorical cadences! In the new populist politics of the post-Nehru period, it is the woman as voter who holds the key to political power. There is an element of the traditional Gandhian appeal to woman-power, i.e. woman's collective power embodied in the concept of '*shakti*'.

In the nationalist discourse, the secularized concept of '*Bharatmata*' or Mother India, representing the toiling masses of rural India, served as a powerful focus of nationalist sentiment. '*Bharatmata Ki Jai*'—Victory to Mother India—became a rousing battle cry which appealed as much to men as to women. Even now the concept of the country as mother continues to serve as a potent rallying cry for nationalist or sub-nationalist sentiment, as in the Assam Movement (1979–1985) when the battle cry was '*Joi Ai Asom*', Victory to Mother Assam.

This paradoxical stance is evident in both the rhetoric and the policy thrusts of the post-Independence Indian state. Neither Nehru nor his daughter had anything original to say on the subject of women above the level of cliché. Nehru, at a gathering of women at the foundation-laying ceremony of a women's college in Madras (1955), could do no better than utter such clichés and banalities as 'you educate the woman, you educate the family', or 'it is necessary for women to be educated, if not for themselves, at any rate for their children' (1958: 399). Another misleading concept, lifted straight from Gandhi, was to the effect that, in rural India, men and women

worked equally in the fields, so there were no distinctions between them (Nehru, 1958: 400; Joshi, 1988: 253). On a more august occasion in 1958, addressing Dr Karve (the pioneer of women's education in India), on his 100th birthday, Nehru spoke about women's education as being more important than men's:.

I say it by way of emphasizing the importance of the mothers and daughters and sisters of a nation. One of the truest measures of a nation's advancement is the state of its women. For out of the women comes the new generation, and it is from their lips and from their laps that it begins to learn. [Nehru, 1964: 424.]

The typecasting of women as wombs to bring forth babies, lips to utter sweet nothings, and laps to cuddle infants, emphasizes the physical (i.e. the 'natural') context in which women are sited in the patriarchal state. It is significant that Nehru is here addressing a gathering of educated women from the SNDT Women's University, of which Dr Karve was the founder. It is almost as if the educated woman is being put in her place and reminded that her chief mission in life is to produce babies—manpower—for the state. On this occasion, Nehru echoed Gandhi's devaluation of educated women by contrasting them with the 'ideal' Indian woman—who though uneducated, weak, and submissive, was mindful of her national duty (Joshi, 1988: 22). In the same speech, Nehru referred to women's role in the 'social revolution', which provided the 'basis of economic stability and progress'. He drew attention to legislation such as the *Special Marriage Act* (permitting inter-religious and inter-caste marriages) and the *Hindu Code Bill* (which conferred the right of divorce, succession to property, and adoption rights on women governed by Hindu personal law, as well as outlawing polygamy). He believed that these laws were 'measures which had long been due, and which would liberate the women of India and give them room to grow'. (Nehru, 1964: 25.)

Nehru considered the laws relating to marriage and to the inheritance rights of women as a personal achievement. It is indeed these very laws that provide a useful index to the state's views on the gender issue, and on the rights of women in particular. In the first place, the state preferred to follow the British colonial practice of non-interference in the religious and social traditions of Indian society, mainly to ensure stability. For the sake of political expediency, the Indian state embodied secularism as one of its guiding principles, in order to accommodate diverse religious interests. In this traditional, patriarchal society, social customs (particularly those appertaining to family and social life) fall under the purview of religion. Thus, the state's intention of providing 'social economic and political justice to its citizens irrespective of race, caste' is set at nought by the specific

meaning given to the term 'secularism'—that of protection rather than toleration of diverse religions.

Institutions deemed to be religiously sanctioned, such as the family and caste system, are outside the sphere of state interference. Their role in institutionalizing social and economic oppression and exploitation—by imposing asymmetrical gender relations, not only in the family between husband and wife, but also in society between upper caste men and women of the lower castes—is thus perpetuated. The upper castes have traditionally maintained their social and economic dominance through the caste system, in which notions of sexual purity and exclusivity are applied to upper caste women and denied to those of the lower castes. Upper caste men have thus gained control of the sexuality, fertility, and labour power of *all* women. They have also exercised control over the labour power of the men of the lower castes by emphasizing the latter's sexual inferiority, powerlessness, lack of exclusive sexual access even to their own women, and their 'inability to protect their women's honour'. Thus, the state's interpretation of secularism as non-interference in religious practices, which affect the lives of all citizens (irrespective of race, caste, sex, and place of birth) through the universal institution of the family and the personal laws governing it, make a mockery of its 'democratic' and 'socialist' character, and its commitment to secure equality and social justice.

The failure of the Indian state to provide a uniform civil code, consistent with its democratic secular and socialist declarations, further illustrates the 'modern' state's accommodation of the traditional interests of a patriarchal society. In the course of the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, three members (including two women, viz. Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta)¹ registered their dissent when a uniform civil code was excluded from the fundamental rights to be enshrined in the Constitution, and was instead consigned to the section on Directive Principles of State Policy. This, in effect, meant that the matter could be shelved, as these principles represent an indefinite agenda for social change. A *Hindu Code Bill*, drafted by a law committee set up even before Independence, was unceremoniously dropped after interminable delays. This was followed by the resignation of Ambedkar who, as Law Minister, had been entrusted with the task of piloting it through parliament. Eventually, sections of the original bill relating to marriage, succession, and adoption rights of Hindu women, were piloted by Nehru and passed against the current of conservative opinion (including the then President) which opposed its passage.

¹ Both were active members of women's organizations during the nationalist struggle (Sharma, 1988: 121)

The modern 'liberal' views of Nehru on women's rights are to be seen not only against a background of the die-hard views on the sanctity of Hindu law voiced by his opponents, but also against his own application of the 'Gandhian synthesis' which sought to relegate any change in these matters to a framework of 'social reform'. 'Social reform' in India consisted largely of the activities of nineteenth century social reformers as amplified by Gandhi. These were inspired by the belief that change on the 'moral' plane could (and indeed should) be brought about without disturbing the temporal relations of power embodied in changes on the political and economic planes. The material changes in Hindu law embodied in the new Acts included the banning of polygamy and the right to divorce, and the granting of succession and adoption rights to Hindu women. The actual conditions of Hindu marriage, which sustain asymmetrical gender relations between husband and wife, such as patrilocality (the custom of '*kanyadan*' with the associated practice of dowry), have been left undisturbed.

This means that it is woman, in her role as wife, mother, daughter or widow only, that is the issue here, and not her individual rights as a citizen, indistinguishable from man. Indeed, in the event of a conflict between a woman's claim to her fundamental rights as a citizen and her status under personal law, the court invariably upholds the primacy of the latter (Balasubrahmanyam, 1983: 1984). In the *Shah Bano* case, the state even went to the length of legislating *ex post facto* in order to ensure the primacy of personal law over her fundamental rights (in this case, Article 14 of the Constitution, guaranteeing the right to equality before law) as citizen.

During the debate on the *Hindu Code Bill*, Nehru applied the reform argument in almost the same terms as those put forward by the nineteenth century social reformers. This entailed a return to the pristine purity of the Indian traditions as represented in Asoka's Rock Edict No. XII, and in the customary practices of eighty per cent of the Indian population. (Nehru, 1958: 449–450.) Nehru blamed the colonial power for perpetuating the stratification of the caste system through its codification of the Hindu law (Nehru, 1958: 441). He countered the arguments of the conservatives by citing the ideal purity and wifely devotion of traditional figures such as Sita and Savitri, calling on Hindu men to emulate Rama and Satyavan as ideal husbands and as models of liberality and justice!

The die-hards claimed, as archetypal patriarchalists, that the granting of divorce rights to women would let loose an orgy of moral licentiousness (Nehru, 1958: 451), and lead to the propagation of Western sexual mores along the lines revealed in the Kinsey report (Nehru, 1958: 449). Nehru countered their suspicion of 'modernized,

westernized' Indian women with his own version of the 'true' Indian woman, on the model encoded by Gandhi through the nationalist discourse (Joshi, 1988; Kishwar, 1984: 1701). He referred to their 'beauty, grace, charm, shyness, modesty, intelligence, and spirit of sacrifice'. 'I think that if anybody can truly represent the spirit of India, the women can do it and not the men'. (Nehru 1958, 453.)

Women's education formed a major element in the state's view of the gender issue. Though a national committee on women's education was set up in 1959 to facilitate the expansion of women's education, the special courses thought likely to interest women included home science, music, drawing, painting, and nursing. This was extraordinarily similar to the Victorian perspective that the aim of women's education was to make them better 'homemakers'.

This was precisely Indira Gandhi's view when, after rhapsodizing to a foreign interviewer (1968) about the number of women doctors, girls' schools, etc., she ended with the comment that an 'educated woman made a better home-maker and better wife', marriage for women being the 'biggest career' (Gandhi, 1971: 12, 41). In a speech at the Silver Jubilee celebration of SNDT Women's University, she appealed to educated women to work with the not-so-educated for the 'national interest'. The 'national interest' closest to her heart then was family planning, on which she proceeded to elaborate. This thrust of family planning policy was spelt out even more succinctly after the fiasco of the Emergency style of family planning by Indira Gandhi, who advocated a 'positive approach'. She asserted that 'women's education is particularly important' as part of such a new approach (Gandhi, 1981).

Family ideology and social welfare

The association of women's education with family planning became a key element of state policy on women, signalling at the same time a shift in national priorities towards population control. The *National Policy on Education* (NPE) (1986) exemplifies this thrust:

The growth of population needs to be brought down significantly over the coming decades. The largest single factor that could help achieve this is the spread of literacy and education among women. [GOI, 1986: 1; 13.]

The steadfast refusal of the state to see women in any context other than the familial is also clear from its attitude to the question of women and work. In the traditional agricultural sector, woman's work is an extension of her family role. She functions as an unpaid helper whose work is unrecognized and unrecorded (for instance, in the

census data). In the modern industrial sector, the phenomenon of the increasing marginalization of women has been noted (GOI, 1974: 153). There is a growing trend towards decreasing women's employment in line with the perception of them as 'unskilled' (i.e. in terms of modern technical skills). Corresponding to this decline, there has been an increase in women's participation in the unorganized sector of home-based production.

Gandhi had strongly disapproved of women going out to work. He believed that this made them vulnerable to sexual attack. Instead, he advocated spinning as a cottage industry as it could be done in the privacy of the home (Joshi, 1988: 34, 43). This, far from drawing women into social production, has further marginalized them, and relegated them to the household production sector, thus reinforcing the image of women as unskilled workers.

The state's policy both reflects and encourages this trend in women's economic participation. Despite its limited character, the state sector sets the model for women's employment. Woman work is perceived as being predisposed in favour of the 'service' sector (cf. Engels, 1977: 73). Thus, the Third Five Year Plan advocates the recruitment of women to family planning programmes, and also calls for trained workers to take up welfare projects 'attracting a sufficient number of women for taking up vocations like *gram sevikas* [village level social workers], nurses, health visitors, teachers, and child-welfare workers [*bal sevikas*]' and to this end provision 'for residential accommodation, transport and work opportunities in voluntary organizations are to be created' (Government of India, 1964: 179).

Subsequently, however, from the Sixth Five Year Plan onwards, changed national priorities, including the need for population control and international compulsions (Mies, 1986: 122), led to greater emphasis on women's economic role. New concepts of development, and particularly underdevelopment, with emphasis on the rural element, led to the identification of women as 'a vital human resource' that was 'under-utilized' (Alva, 1988: 53). Referring to the Club of Rome *Report* (1971), in which 'women were identified as victims of development policies that focused on growth strategies', Margaret Alva² pointed to the Seventh Five Year Plan's directive to bring women into the mainstream of national development (Government of India, 1985: vol. 2, p. 313) through a 'new image of women that rejects the existing stereotypes'.

But the image of woman that emerges in the Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans still remains basically that of mother and unpaid household servant, and is in no sense an empowering one. Women's

² Then Minister for Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

employment is perceived as a supplement to the family income, or as bringing about their own economic rehabilitation, or 'enhancing the capabilities of the mother to look after the health and nutritional needs of the children'. Though couched in more sophisticated 'management-oriented' language, the priority areas for women remain the same. They include 'education, health and health care as well as nutrition and related delivery system, reduction of infant mortality; meaningful participation in many skilled jobs in advanced science and technology areas like medicine and medical research, electronics and informatics, education and teaching energy conservation and in improving the quality of life'. The emphasis is on woman's nurturant role as the provider of nutrition, health care, and education. In the rural sector, the benefits of women's employment are clearly stated in the chapter on 'Women and Development'.

With an increase in women's employment the income of the household will go up, thereby resulting not only in raising the nutrition and child care in the family, but also bringing down the[ir] birth and infant mortality rate [Government of India, 1981, p. 426].

Instead of providing the basis for women's liberation from social bondage, participation in social production thus becomes an additional burden. The recent economic phenomenon of female-headed rural families, caused by the migration of rural men to urban centres (Government of India, 1985), provides a case in point. Women heading such families are forced to take up the entire economic burden of caring for the family. Men are thus freed for social production, to be exploited in the cities as cheap labour. They are denied a family wage, because their wives and children are seen as 'augmenting' the family income. Since the wife's wage is considered supplementary to the husband's, an additional reason is found for paying women less than standard wages both in government sponsored 'income-generating schemes' (such as low-paid *anganwadi* workers or *bal-sevikas*), and in the unorganized sector. This has long been the practice in the labour-intensive plantation sector, where the entire family is put to work for a mere subsistence existence (Boserup, 1970).

Just as the state's perception of the family as the economic unit of society shapes its economic policy, a similar concept of the family as a social entity structures its views on social welfare. Despite its much-vaunted commitment to 'socialism' and the establishment of a 'socialist pattern of society', the state has tended to shift the burden of 'social care' on to the family,¹ and, by an extension of their family role of nurturing, to women. The Seventh Five Year Plan states that the welfare of

¹ This tendency is perceived even in modern 'welfare' states in the West (McIntosh, 1978: 273)

children, women and the disabled is linked with the development of the family, the basic social unit' (Government of India, 1985: vol. 2, p. 297). Section 125 of the *Criminal Procedure Code* places the onus for the care of the aged, children and abandoned women on the family (in other words on the women of the family). It is symptomatic of its priorities that the state, which is willing to spend vast sums of money on the public sector in order to subsidize heavy industry and space programmes or other technological advances, is extremely reluctant to undertake its welfare obligation on the grounds of 'expense', and is only too willing to utilize the 'voluntary' services of women, who in any case are carrying out similar tasks in the home without any recompense.

The Constitution lists social welfare as a 'State' subject. However, the Centre which controls the purse strings believes that social welfare does not impinge on the 'national' interest and can therefore be treated as a low priority subject. The Seventh Five Year Plan spells out the 'constraints' on the government in this sphere:

Preventive and developmental services of a domiciliary nature would be accorded priority over institutional care, as the latter tends to be expensive, and lacks a familial atmosphere which is necessary for healthy growth.... As massive efforts cannot be undertaken in all the fields of social welfare due to financial and organizational constraints, a selective approach has to be adopted for undertaking various programmes with a view to maximizing the benefits to a larger number and minimizing administrative costs. Spreading resources thin over a large number of schemes would be avoided in order to make an impact on the intended target groups. [Government of India, 1985: vol. 2, p. 297.]

This cheese-paring approach is compounded by the confusion of 'modern welfare' with 'traditional charity'. The use of terms such as 'beneficiary', 'target groups', and 'delivery of social services' underlines the 'hand-out' and 'crumbs' approach. The paucity of the funds allotted and the selectivity of the programmes are masked by grandiose names and acronyms such as 'poverty-alleviation programmes', Integrated Child Development Programmes (ICDPs), and a plethora of rural development programmes. Women are not only a major target group of welfare schemes, along with children, the disabled, SCs and STs—all of these identified as vulnerable sections of society—but they are also envisaged as the main implementing agencies through 'voluntary' organizations and village level grass roots women's organizations (the *mahila mandals*).

The Gandhian concept of social work as an extension of a woman's familial 'service' role informs the social welfare policies of the Indian state. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB)—the highest body of voluntary social welfare work—and the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards were established at the initiative of Durgabai

Deshmukh, a Gandhian worker. They are based on the concept of women's 'selfless', unpaid (i.e. voluntary) service. Prime Minister Nehru, who gave great importance to the idea of a 'socialist pattern of society' and to the concept of economic planning, resisted the demand for setting up a Ministry of Social Welfare, because he doubted that it would be 'the most efficient way of dealing with the subject' (Nehru, 1964: 430). Durgabai Deshmukh, for her part, believed that the non-official character of the body would be an asset.

However, in practice, the CSWB has become a dependant of whichever ministry it happens to be linked with. Far from being 'a catalyst for social change', as envisaged in the Seventh Five Year Plan, the Social Welfare Boards, both at the Centre and in the States, were, according to a 1982 study carried out by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), at best tolerated and at worst barely recognized. 'They have hardly any role to play in state policy' (Sharma, 1988: 22). It is significant that the only body solely concerned with the welfare of women, children, and other disadvantaged sections, enjoys neither official status as a government agency, nor an autonomous status as a statutory body. It is, for administrative and financial purposes, registered simply as a company. As a Women's Development Studies Centre *Report* puts it

in the absence of an overall perspective on social welfare, the government's efforts in this field remained *ad hoc* and without a clear articulation of national priorities [Sharma, 1988: 81].

One might add that the national priorities revealed in the states' articulation on welfare reveals a clear gender bias. Women, along with those of the traditionally disadvantaged sections of society designated by the Constitution, are regarded as needing special protection and yet are placed last on its political and social agenda. Other items in the Constitution's 'social agenda' relating to women, such as a 'uniform civil code', have yet to come up for consideration. The principle of equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d) of the Constitution) was made operative through legislation only in 1976 with the commencement of the International Women's Decade. The granting of maternity benefits (at least in the organized sector) was conceded shortly after Independence because it fitted in with the state's own interest in maternal welfare.

While locating the site of women's subordination within the family, Marxist theory fails to extend the analysis of the state's appropriation of women's reproductive power by excluding the role of procreation and human sexuality from its analysis of the interaction of man and nature in the social process. If nature is the field of self-activity, as reflected in the history of the development of social institutions,

according to Marxist analysis, what accounts for its silence on this subject? How is it that society's manipulation of the processes of sexuality/procreation fails to get reflected in the Marxist analysis of the state?

Marxist/feminists continue to be puzzled by this. That control and manipulation of human breeding for the reproduction of labour power is an integral part of the mode of production is proved by the fact that regulation of population has always been an integral part of state policy. In the early period of the development of state systems, it was in the state's interest to increase population through measures such as banning abortion and infanticide, by developing 'mother ideologies'.

More recently, the state has developed an interest in limiting population. This is reflected in the Malthusian preoccupation of modern capitalist states (Rose and Hanmer, 1976) and, at their behest, even of underdeveloped states such as India. This interest is behind such state measures as legalization of abortion (1971) and a state-sponsored family planning policy with a thrust on birth control through use of scientific technology, even if these are proved to be harmful to health (e.g. injectible contraceptives). The state's tardiness in banning the use of amniocentesis for female foeticide is another case in point, where state interests take precedence over the general interests of women.

Some changes in the Indian state's perception have been noted between Independence and the '80s, mainly as a result of the International Women's decade and changing world and national perspectives on women. As an observer points out:

Policy debates during the last decade [1975–85] marked a shift in terms of viewing women as targets of social welfare measures to that of participants in the process of development [Sharma, 1988: xxxi].

But the underlying patriarchal assumptions remain unchanged, not only in the actual thrust of the programmes (particularly in the fields of education, family planning, and social welfare as outlined above) but also in the rhetoric of the national leaders. Even when the ostensible aim is the empowerment of women as, for instance, in the much-touted *Panchayati Raj Bill*, the underlying patriarchal thrust of the power discourse is never far from the surface:

There is a vast uncultivated field of talent lying fallow in rural India. It is that fallow field we now propose to use. That field will be watered by the votes of the members of this House and of your colleagues in the Rajya Sabha. The crop of talent you raise will give us the bountiful harvest to take our nation forward to a prosperous glorious future. [Gandhi, 1989: 21.]

Powerfully implicit in the passage is the whole force of the Indian

concept of '*purusha/prakriti*' (the male principle which is fertilizing, and the female which receives the seed). It is not just women but whole sections of the male population which are conceived of as feminine, that is passive, in relation to the dominant male ethos of the power configurations of the state, represented here by the members of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha (mostly male/upper caste/educated/upper-class) who are perceived as encouraging the Indian masses to work for the good of the nation.

Challenges to the state and patriarchy in the '70s

The last decade has witnessed the rise of anti-state movements initiated by various sections of the Indian people—workers, students, peasants and women. The benevolent paternalism of the Gandhi–Nehru variety has lost its credibility. The Communist Party-led peasant movements of the post-Independence period in Telangana and West Bengal have been put down by force. During the '60s, the double split in the communist movement, the rise of social tensions due to famine and drought conditions, the spectre of unemployment, and the Green Revolution led to a second resurgence of peasant revolts in parts of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar. The socially and economically most oppressed and exploited sections of India—the Adivasis and peasants belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes—were involved in these revolts which were led by a section of disenchanted students and intelligentsia. They posed a direct challenge to the state, whose power was controlled in the rural areas by a combination of landlords, police, and bureaucracy—the three elements which had colluded in the oppression of peasants.

Other communist and socialist-led movements included the women's anti-price movement in Maharashtra, the railwaymen's strike, and the Nav Nirman movement in Bihar and Gujarat under Jayaprakash Narayan's leadership. The state revealed its true character as an instrument of class rule, and its powers of repression were invoked to put down the voices of popular dissent. The abrogation overnight of fundamental rights with the imposition of internal Emergency in 1975 revealed the hollowness of the state discourse. The rule of law was overturned, 'black' laws with sweeping powers of arrest and intimidation were put into effect. Women also suffered repression. Many of them were imprisoned and raped during the period of emergency rule.

Rural as well as urban women played an active role in these movements. Students, housewives, and members of revolutionary groups also took part. After the upsurge during the period leading up

to Independence, the women's movement had entered a post-Independence lull. Its leaders and the mainstream organizations under the control of the Congress Party were co-opted into the government in subsidiary posts or were made office-bearers of the newly constituted Social Welfare Boards.

The Left stream of women in the pre-Independence period formed the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) in 1951, which was active in the anti-price rise movement. The old guard still continued to look towards the Gandhian 'social construction' approach, tuned to 'welfare' goals such as social reform, prohibition, rehabilitation of destitutes, women in distress, and so on. The post-war generation of educated, articulate women rejected the traditionalist approach. At the same time, their participation in democratic and popular movements, including ecological and people's science movements, opened up the possibility for alternative discourses that challenged the state's basic assumptions of national priorities and goals. There was also at the time a critical appraisal of the placement of women in the counter-discourses; the feminist discourse that emerged towards the end of the '70s and early '80s intersected the state discourse at two points. These intersections gave rise to two debates which may be termed as the development debate and feminist debate.

The Chipko or tree conservation movement of Uttarakhand, which was initiated and led by Gandhian men, gained its militancy from the involvement of large numbers of rural women who were the first to raise the gender issue in the development debate. Large-scale deforestation in the hills shut off women's access to fuel, water, and fodder in a largely traditional economy. The entry of forest contractors and liquor agents increased their miseries. Their experience, tied in with the new perceptions of women, particularly in Third World countries, as victims of the development process, helped popularize the slogan of 'development for the people'. Populist leaders (e.g. Rajiv Gandhi) started to mouth such slogans as 'development is basically about people'.

The experience of the Chipko movement in particular gave rise to a widespread notion that rural women in hill areas were engaged in a militant struggle, when in fact their actions reflected spontaneous courage. Unlike their menfolk, women had had no direct contact with the repressive structures of the state. So, they showed no fear in confronting forest contractors, forest officers, and liquor dealers, little realizing that they had the support of the state (Jain, 1984: 1793). To some extent, they were expressing spontaneous reactions and positions that were not well thought through. This brought them into conflict with their menfolk, whose short-term interests would be served by the development of thinly forested areas, with employment

avenues in government-sponsored projects, roadways, and other similar work opportunities. The women were more concerned with the long-term aspects of ecological disturbance of their environment. There was also the influence of the Gandhian alternative, that is a rural-based, small-scale sector economy.

The feminist discourse not only took up the issue of gender bias and, in particular, the repressive character of the state machinery; it also attempted a redefinition of 'women's issues', within the state discourse and outside. It examined the role of women in popular mass movements—especially democratic movements led by Left parties and inspired by leftist ideology—and the possibilities of autonomous organizations of women. Autonomous women's groups sprang up in the metropolitan cities. *Manushi*, a women's journal from Delhi, began publication in 1978 in English, Hindi, and regional languages such as Bengali, Marathi, and Assamese (Desai, 1988). The publication in 1974 of *Towards Equality: The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* revealed the gap between the promise of women's equality and the actual conditions governing the lives of the majority of them. Widespread awareness of women's conditions led to the development of Women's Studies in academic institutions and also an extension of activism among women. Movement-initiated conferences and seminars were held with the aim of legitimizing the issue of women's rights.

Women's rights were placed in a concrete, visible context, stemming from the ongoing self-activity of women, not only at the popular level of media publicity, but also in corridors of power at the policy-making level in government and political parties alike.

The politics of rape

It was through the issue of rape that the feminist debate entered the public domain. Rape has always been situated at the intersection of the private/public assertion of power. It is the ultimate expression of power relations not only between men and women but also among different classes of men. This is true both in times of war and political crisis, and in the day-to-day maintenance of power relations characterized by domination/subordination. The public/private character of rape reveals the double standard of the patriarchal ethos—in the public area of politics as the *dev/dasi*, and in the context of family and social relations as purity/pollution. When the issue of rape surfaces as a political issue, it is only in the public context of the question of a nation, community, or group 'honour', the violated women being merely a factor in an antagonistic encounter between

groups of men. This is the violent counterpoint to the supposedly non-antagonistic contacts involved in the institution of marriage (Rubin, 1975).

Gandhi used the honour of women as part of the emotive appeal of the nationalist discourse, even while he advised women to commit suicide in order to save themselves from dishonour worse than death (Joshi, 1988). The issue of rape has been used by parties and movements as a key element in their anti-state discourse. In the early '70s, the CPI(M-L)-led peasant movement in Bhojpur, used rape, along with the general issue of caste oppression/exploitation of SC tenants/labourers, as a prominent issue in the struggle against the combination of landlord/police/State administration combination. It thereby achieved a general mobilization of poor peasants and SCs (Mukherjee and Yadav, 1980).

But here too women were the victims, counters or objects in what was perceived as a class struggle. Rape was conceived not as a gender issue, but as one of the many elements of oppression by one class on another. There is no evidence of a joint endeavour by men and women in the movement to probe deeply into the politics of sexism, of which rape is a visible and violent manifestation.

The issue of rape was first taken up as a woman-specific issue by the Autonomous Women's movement of the '80s. Taking up the now famous Mathura case, Autonomous Women's Groups (AWGs) in Bombay, Delhi, and Hyderabad drew attention to the links between the issue of rape and the structures of power. They highlighted the complicity at all levels of the state machinery with the guilty—from the lowest (the constables) to the highest (the Supreme Court of India itself, which had refused a verdict of guilty against the accused on the ground of 'consent'). Following the *Criminal Procedure Code* laid down by the British colonial government, the state treated the issue of rape as a law and order problem in the realm of 'criminal aberration'. This treatment amply reflects the patriarchal public/private division. Section 375 of the *Indian Penal Code* (IPC) takes no cognisance of marital rape.

Rape itself is treated as a private matter, the onus of proof of lack of consent being upon the rape victim. Far from the state taking responsibility for punishing rapists, the victim of rape must initiate and sustain the prosecution against the attacker.¹ Ironically, it is usually the rape victim who ends up in jail for her 'safe custody', often because the family is reluctant to take her back, let alone help in the prosecution. In order to prove a woman's consent, allegations are made of prostitution and 'loose morals'. This is a reflection of the

¹ This accounts for the low rate of convictions for rape. See Flavia (1987: 6).

persistence of double standards of morality, where the assailant (who has committed an act of gross violation) appears to be less culpable than the victim, whose sexuality (indeed whose *sex/gender*) itself is seen as an invitation to violence. It is interesting that the state's view of rape as a law and order problem is upheld by members of the women's wing of the CPI(M), the major partner of the Left Front Government of West Bengal since 1977 (Sarkar, 1991; Karat, 1991).

The AWGs took the issue of rape out of the private domain of a man–woman interaction, when they took up the Mathura case. They revealed the political (i.e. public) aspect of what is invariably seen as a personal or private crime. The fact that Mathura was sixteen years of age, poor, and lower caste, and that the rapists were policemen in positions of authority within the state apparatus, revealed a structure of power-relations in which gender asymmetry constituted the primary factor. The issue of rape was brought out of the area of 'criminal aberration', and brought into the reality of every woman's existence. A pamphlet published by the Forum Against Rape (Bombay) which was founded in order to take up the Mathura case, states that 'women do not face the terror of rape as individuals but as a category. Mass-rape is often used as a weapon to demonstrate power' (Savara, 1980: 627). It then went on to list the cases in which collective rape was used (by the army and police in state-sponsored actions) in order to break the morale of struggling groups.

By taking up the issue of rape, the AWGs highlighted the collective affirmation of women's social and public identity as subjects of the historical and political process, and not just as victims. Thus, the state's and society's perception of women as weak and in need of protection (for which, nevertheless, the family was held responsible) was definitively challenged by the AWGs. Rape is traditionally seen as a defilement of family honour, and a common reaction is to hide or ignore it, or to regard it as a peripheral occurrence on the fringes of society and somehow 'asked for' by the rape victim. By reaching out from their own protected environments to individuals like Mathura, middle-class women were reaffirming the links between common gender oppression within the family and the more blatant forms of oppression outside it, such as rape, dowry murder, and even sati, the latter leading back to

the capillary forms in which power is rooted in the everyday world and through which its reproduction is guaranteed [Kannabiran and Shatrugna 1986, 34].

Or, as yet another group puts it

[women must] reach out and link [their] own personal struggles at home and [in their] families with those of other women seeking new ways of regaining their self-worth and identity [*Saheli*, 1984: 1].

This experience of solidarity, cutting across the public/private divide, strikes at the divisive privatization of women's existence within the boundaries of home and family (a major factor in the continuance of gender oppression).

The autonomy issue and women's goals

The issue of autonomy served as another focusing point for the feminist debate. A viable policy hinges on the question of whether all, or only some men (or groups of men) are the enemy. No-one thinks in terms of an Amazon state or even a matriarchy. At issue here is the trap of feminist isolationism, the 'women only' issue. It is a favourite tactic of the state and established political parties to subsume women's issues into larger programmes and to co-opt activists, thereby marginalizing women from mainstream politics. Feminist groups are aware of the necessity of both having autonomous organizations in order to avoid being subsumed and, at the same time, of creating links with other groups in order not to become marginalized—organizing, if possible, a new coalition of submerged groups (landless labourers, informal sector workers, Dalits and Adivasis) who can some day aspire to be a majority political coalition? (Jahan, 1991: 8; Sathyamurthy, 1993).

Politically active women have expressed fears that the recent promise of thirty per cent reservation of seats for women, initially in local level bodies such as Panchayats (already conceded in the States of Maharashtra and Karnataka), will only serve to ghettoize and marginalize them by strengthening the notion of women as a separate 'constituency' (Patel, 1991: 46, 48). The implications of autonomy for the AWGs, both in terms of an organizational principle and in terms of the specific nature of women's oppression, are identified in the following passage:

'This quest for autonomy was not a repetition of the earlier need for establishing separate all-women's groups in order to attract more women members. It was a reaction to the fact that in most organizations women found that issues concerning them were given minimal attention and delegated to women's cadres alone. While the organizations paid lip-service to the women's cause, they seldom put their strength into tackling women's issues. Secondly, the ideological stagnation and disinterest in attempting to go beyond the existing understanding of women's issues and a refusal to revise the strategy for their struggles was disturbing. [Gandhi, 1986: 88.]

What is clearly at issue here is not separatism, but assertion of women's autonomy as a prerequisite for liberation—not just as

members of a class, but as *women* or (as the neologism coined by the movement) *manushi*, with emphasis placed on:

humanity, not manhood, because we feel manhood has mainly been expressed through violence, warfare, aggression and domination [Kishwar and Vanita, 1991: 240].

On the issue of autonomy, the main interaction of the AWGs has been with the Left parties and groups. Most AWGs see themselves as broadly within the leftist orbit (libertarian, democratic, anti-communal, anti-fundamentalist, and so on), and so it is in this context that they envisage their role (Kannabiran and Shatrugna, 1986: 25). For their part, the Leftists, specifically communist parties, have tended to view women primarily as an enabling force in organizational strategies. The key terms here are mobilization *versus* participation. The 'mainstream' political parties, including Congress(I), have long been aware of the role of women in a democracy, where votes play a determining role (as evidenced by their sponsorship of 30 per cent reservation, women's wings and conventions, National Commissions on Women, and Perspective Plans).

But it is in the context of left politics that mobilization of women has always been a crucial element, both in militant movements and in electoral battles. Congress politics have always operated through caste networks, family alliances, and patron-client linkages, factors which are not usually available to left parties (though caste is beginning to exert some influence). Moreover, among the sections which constitute the traditional Left bases—mainly Adivasis and peasants—women are freer from patriarchal controls and play a more assertive role in social life. Their support, therefore, plays a crucial role in mass mobilizations. In Communist-led peasant insurrections such as the Tebhaga movement or in rebellions such as that of the Warli in Maharashtra, women have been in the forefront (Cooper, 1979: 47). In the ultimate analysis, however, they have played only a supportive role, giving shelter, rescuing people, etc. (Saldanha, 1986: WS-50; Cooper, 1979: 48). They have not been given a decision-making role.

Thus, the Left's own perception of the role of women in the struggle has not been reinforced by actual practice and remains caught in the strait-jacket of dogmatic Marxism, according to which women's emancipation would mechanically follow the socialist revolution.

Official documents reveal that the communist parties viewed women solely in the context of mass mobilization on class issues. The last and seventeenth item of the programme of the democratic revolution of the undivided CPI mentions equal democratic rights to women. In the section on the tasks of the party, the development of a

women's front comes last, after trade union, peasants, students, youth (in that order of priority) (Rao, 1976: 87, 103). As if it is mandatory that women come last, as on the eating line!

[As] the peasant women constitute the dominant section of the oppressed womenfolk of India, that is why there must be the consistent effort to draw them into the struggles of their class as well as to take up their own special demands [Rao, 1976: 105].

Women, particularly 'toiling' women, are to be organized to support the workers' struggle for a living wage and the peasants' struggle for land, which are seen as the common demands of the toiling classes. The struggle for such common demands is distinguished from the 'women's fight against unjust social prejudices and oppression, their ignorance, superstition, and unequal position in society'. This in turn will be 'a powerful part in the democratic fight of mothers of all classes', including the middle class, 'to ensure a better future for their children' (Rao, 1976: 104–5). The appeal is yet again to women in their role as wives and mothers.

This was the party's perception in 1948. As the editor of these documents puts it, 'when the party could have gone forward with seven league boots, it was precisely then that it was found wanting' (Rao, 1976: v).

The party's view on the woman question provides one such instance of uncreative thinking. After 1951, the CPI decided to take part in electoral politics where 'mobilization, the game of numbers' (Gandhi and Shah, 1986: 4) became a dominating factor. Nor did the situation change much after the 1964 split. In an account of the Indian political scene of 1974, a very senior and important CPI(M) leader listed under 'Educational and Cultural Demands', educational demands, outrages on SCs and STs, rights of Muslim minorities, Urdu, fighting Hindu and Muslim communalism, rounding off the hotch-potch with 'finally, equal status and opportunities should be given to women in all fields' (Namboodiripad, 1974: 159). It appears and sounds like an afterthought. It is also noteworthy that 'cultural and educational' demands are placed in this list after 'political' and 'economic' demands (in that order), reflecting a well-defined intellectual hierarchy. In other official literature too, the prevailing tendency is to place women's demands in the 'social' section which includes abolition of untouchability, education, health, and culture (Sen, 1977: 438, 558). These are seen as belonging to the superstructure rather than to the essential structure of society and therefore as belonging to the sphere of 'reform' rather than 'revolution'.

The feminist demand for autonomy led to a readjustment in the thinking of the communist parties on women. This was reflected in a

rearrangement of priorities to include women's issues such as rape family violence and job discrimination, and in the revitalization of their women's wings and formation of 'women's cells' in trade unions. Even so, the communist parties, including their women leaders, still continue to view the AWM as a disruptive influence (Ranadive, 1990: 59)—organizationally as well as ideologically.³

On the ideological plane, the feminist principle of autonomy is perceived as disruptive of the Marxist view of the primacy of the class struggle and the entire concept of proletarian revolution, based on the principles of capital and wage theory, which are held to be sacrosanct. In a vicious attack against feminists, accusing them among other things of being inspired and financed by Western capitalist ideology, a CPI(M) leader has referred to women misled by feminist 'misguidance' who are to

be convinced patiently and brought back. Women are to be told that a common struggle of men and women only will lead them to their emancipation. [Ranadive, 1990, 68]

Thus, on the one hand, the communist parties accuse feminist groups of opposing the 'politicization of women in general, and working women in particular' (politics here meaning rising prices, attacks on Dalits and bonded labour, unemployment (i.e. electoral issues)). On the other, the communist parties themselves relegate dowry deaths and rape to the level of social problems. Ranadive, CPI(M)'s woman leader, thus claims to expose the 'non-political ideology' of the feminists, i.e. the elevation of issues considered to be 'social', to a political level and presumably downgrading those issues routinely counted political by the party.

Central to the argument is the concept of politics, not as self-activity as conceived by the feminists, but as ideology within the Liberal/Marxist frameworks. Alternatively, the non-political stance of the AWM can be explained in terms of a rejection of powerpolitics (Jahan, 1991: 7). This overall tendency of AWMs reflects the vestigial influence of Gandhian ideology, which stresses woman's superior 'moral' nature as being above dirty politics, as well as a practical reluctance to engage in 'power games' (given the AWC's serious organizational and theoretical weakness (Kannabiran and Shatrugna, 1986)).

In the present undeveloped state of theory and practice, these

³ For an account of how the Left perceives feminists—as disrupting organizational activities including meetings sponsored by the Left itself by introducing 'delicate' subjects and by betraying a preference for an egalitarian as opposed to a centrist style of functioning, see Ranadive (1990, 65)

lacunae are reaching the surface in the form of failure of the women's movements to respond adequately to the challenges of the state-sponsored resurgence of communalism and fundamentalism, leading to a reinforcing of the patriarchal structures of society as in the Shah Bano and the sati (e.g. Roop Kanwar) cases. At the same time, there is a real need for the women's movement to learn to deal with 'power and power politics' if it is to move from the 'fringes to the mainstream of all activity that shapes the future' (Bakshi, 1986: 10).

Marxism and feminism: a new realignment?

In the post-Emergency period, the movement of Communist (Marxist–Leninist) parties has included an engagement with the AWM. The motivation for this lay in the former's policy of changing the earlier line of mass-mobilization to a new style of participatory politics during the '80s, including new strategies of mass fronts and joint activities. The AWM too was keen to forge links between women and other oppressed sections of the population. It was involved in efforts to move from group activity (functioning more or less as a women's lobby using pressure tactics such as press mobilizations, taking up individual cases, consciousness raising, etc.) and towards a greater involvement in mass politics. The encounter between Marxism and feminism, however, continues to be an uneasy one. The CPI (M-L) parties and groups have built up mass women's organizations in areas such as Bihar, Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal (Desai, 1989). They have made the sexual exploitation of Dalit women one of the issues of peasant struggles in Bihar (Bharti, 1990) and created a mass, militant movement. But the idea of autonomy appears to have been used more as a tactic than as a vital organizational and theoretical principle.

The exploration of joint activities between AWGs and other strands of the women's movement, which the CPI(M) conceptualizes as feminist and democratic according to whether, in particular circumstances, they subscribe to autonomy or democratic organization (the latter being signified by such names as 'Janvadi' Mahila Sangha or 'Progatishel' Mahila Sangh) is constrained by the concept of party unity and democratic centralism.

Yet the very attempt to engage with feminist autonomy on its own ground provides some interesting formulations. At a national women's convention sponsored by the Indian People's Front (IPF) (a front organization linked to the CPI (M-L) Liberation group), a paper was presented by the Forum against Oppression of Women (FOW), one of the oldest and most vocal of the AWGs. In it networking was offered as a form of joint action, 'a loose structure dependent on

individual contacts and periodic meetings' (Gandhi and Shah, 1986: 7). Clearly, this reflected the frequently expressed fears of the AWCs that they would be swamped by the mass organizations, thus losing the specific character of a small group whose sole remit was in the field of 'conscientization and propaganda' (Kannabiran and Shatrugna, 1986: 24). In the same paper, attention is also focused on the patriarchal attitudes of political organizations where trivialization and patronage are seen as 'individual chauvinism rather than as rooted in the organization[al] structure itself'.

Women's organizations, modelling themselves on political parties, are warned of the danger of 'imbibing the existing hierarchical manipulative attitudes if reorganizing and rethinking is not attempted in a conscious and deliberate manner' (Gandhi and Shah, 1986: 7). Nonetheless, a trend is clearly developing of feminists appropriating the Marxist discourse in order to express their need for links with the organizations of other exploited and oppressed strata such as 'toilers, Adivasis, Dalits, slum-dwellers' (Patel, 1986: 6), and to strengthen their case against the patriarchal policies of the state.

On their part, the CPI(M-L) organizations have acknowledged the need for autonomous organizations of women on gender issues and for recognizing the specificity of women's oppression in society, if not altogether the 'primacy of sexual/gender contradictions' (Omvedt, 1986a: 36). In a party journal, party members 'who otherwise worked hard for the proletarian cause but nurtured philistine ideas regarding male-female relations' have been urged to change their 'non-proletarian attitude towards women' (*Liberation*, 1987: 25). 'The proletarian movement, quite apart from eliminating exploitative property relations at the base, also aims at eliminating the oppressive gender relationship of male domination, replacing it with a relationship based on equality.' Obviously, in the task of 'mobilizing women against all sorts of oppression, integrating it with the great movement to transform the old dilapidated society', a model of behaviour 'with regard to male-female relationships' is essential, the more so as it concerns 'half of the human race' (*Liberation*, 1987: 24-5).

The problem arises in the matter of organization. The term '*independent*' (which does not carry the radical connotations of the term 'autonomous' with its feminist associations) that is, *broad-based non-party* women's organizations are favoured and issue-based joint forums and joint activities encouraged. But this is on the condition that the distinct character of party forces is maintained, which calls for developing 'well-trained women activists and cadres, particularly from among intellectuals' (*Liberation*, 1985: 20). The balance is between mobilizing the broad masses of women and party-building so that the 'proletariat can intervene in the ongoing women's movement and provide it with a correct orientation' (*Liberation*, 1985: 22).

In the dialectics of power, it is once again obvious that the Marxist

discourse has come out on top of the feminist, and that women's issues are still only paid lip-service. The paternal attitude of the party is particularly evident in the latitude given to female members to whom certain tasks in the area of women's issues have been allotted, in order to enable them to promote and perfect the party's positive analysis of feminism (CPI(M-L) 1988, 2.10/11).

The party report to the Fourth Congress in 1988 carried a lengthy paper on the women's movement in India, where 'women's emancipation' is demarcated as 'one of the most important issues of the democratic and revolutionary movement' (CPI(M-L), 1988, 1.7.24). It recognized that the oppression of women cuts across class lines, though poor, landless and Adivasi women (and women of the working class) are regarded as the worst victims of oppression. Oppression of women is seen as part of the feudal culture and economic structure. The struggle for the emancipation of women is considered, therefore, to be 'a cardinal feature of the new democratic revolution, which aims not only at the complete elimination of the feudal economy and politics but also that of feudal culture' (CPI(M-L) 1988, 1.7.24).

The report agreed that though Marxists were the first to take up the question of women's emancipation, the communist movement had failed to regard it with due seriousness because of a mechanical application of Marxist theory. Recognizing its failure to take up women's issues in the past, the party announced its decision to take it up in 'right earnest'. The CPI(M-L) Liberation Group's stand is that women's participation in the general movement, divorced from the specific issues of women's oppression, or involvement in specific women's issues divorced from the general movement for revolutionary change, are both incorrect, the grass-roots feminist movements being classed in the latter group (Document, CPI(M-L), 1988, 1.7.26). The democratic/Marxist, that is the Marxist line of the new democracy, seeks to combine with the liberation/participatory (grass-roots) line of feminist practice in formulating the correct line on the women's question. The tactic suggested is to unite with these organizations in order to politicize the more advanced sections without resorting to 'unnecessary confrontationist practices' (CPI(M-L), 1988, 1.7.27).

Other CPI(M-L) groups have also organized women on women-specific issues, since the late '70s, along the lines of the autonomous women's groups. But their perceptions appear to be framed within the general pattern of the Maoist line of the new democratic movement. A report of one such group in Assam (the All Assam Nari Mukti Santha (AANMS)), while employing the liberationist language of feminism, at least in name, speaks of 'people's courts', 'speak-bitterness meetings', 'landlords and bad gentry', and sees women as subjected to an 'additional oppression, i.e. male oppression, besides

feudal oppression and imperialist plunder' (Raman, 1984: 1). One radical element, claimed as 'an interesting and unique feature of the AANMS Programme', consisted of giving social recognition to unmarried mothers. In practice this meant getting maintenance for 'such children' (Raman, 1984: 3).

The report concentrates on the mobilization of women for the larger interests of the CPI(M-L) movement, by organizing among specific sections such as ethnic minorities and against the 'chauvinist' Assam Movement. Thus, for instance, it is claimed that one of the leaders, the President of the AANMS, was on the death-list of the chauvinists for her alleged opposition to the movement (Raman, 1984: 2). Even those rape issues which were, reportedly, taken up seem to have been directed more towards mobilizing support against particular landlords/'bad gentry' elements than to exposing the structures of oppression. Such instrumentalist appropriation of the feminist discourse is evident in the conclusion of the report in which the gains of the movement are described as

leading to the formation of peasant and labourer associations, and 'drawing the women of the oppressed and exploited sections into revolutionary struggle though with their own specific demands and struggles' [Raman, 1984: 7].

So class rather than gender oppression is the issue here, though the latter is used as a mobilizing factor for the former.

Feminist soul-searching

It is true that feminists have been deeply conscious of the working of patriarchy in traditional, including Marxist, parties. Even so, the enemy within (in other words, the patriarchal assumptions lurking within the women's movement itself) has scarcely been confronted or even acknowledged. An Australian scholar's critique of Indian feminists, which drew attention to the intersecting point where 'feminism collides and colludes with the discourse of Orientalism' (Stephens, 1990: 20), evoked a great deal of anger among Indian feminists (Krishna Raj, 1990a). The Western origins of feminism have long been part of the anti-feminist discourse. In the nationalist discourse, the Western women's movement was represented in derogatory terms (Joshi, 1988), equated with Katherine Mayo, English-educated westernized Indian women, and the propensity to loose sexual morals (Joshi, 1988) (in contrast with the patriotic purity of Indian women). Even now, in certain contexts, the women's movement is characterized as 'western, modern, anti-traditional', and hence anti-Indian, as in the

sati incident in Deorala, where protesting women activists were described by political leaders of rightist parties as city women with loose morals: *bazaari aurat* (*bazaari women*).

But this attack was different, coming from the modern camp. The Indianness of the Indian feminists was contested on the ground of 'the real India', which they were so anxious to represent. It was the reversal of the numbers game—the much talked of reaching out—a modern version of the favourite slumming of Victorian philanthropists. It tied in with leftist criticism of bourgeois feminists who were working in collusion with capitalist interests in order to subvert the Third World women's movement (Ranadive, 1990: 63). It also echoed the statement of a democratic women's organization affiliated to a CPI(M-L) group that it had 'no fancy for bourgeois feminist ideologies' (*Liberation*, 1990: 23).

It is a problematic point. Perspectives differ, so do strategies. The self-perception of an urban, educated, employed middle-class woman as being independent is quite likely to be worlds removed from that of an uneducated, poor (or even fairly well-to-do) woman from a rural, small town or urban slum area. The former may see herself as independent not only in a financial sense, but as possessing a liberated mind, free from the bindings of religious beliefs and caste and community feelings. The latter is situated in a context of economic deprivation/dependence, tied to religious ritual and custom, enclosed in networks of caste and community within a traditional social structure.

The cultural deracination of modernity explains the inability of the progressive woman to comprehend the real appeal of religious and communal feelings for large numbers of women. In the many women's conferences organized by AWGs, the urban feminists revel in the sense of sisterhood as a potent elixir. But how much concrete support can the urban groups offer, apart from films, videos, literature, resource persons at women's *shibirs* (camps), and intangible solidarity? How far can urban feminists, including *Manushi*, articulate the true voice of Indian women, apart from the mandatory photograph of a (preferably) ethnic-costumed, work-worn woman's face on its cover? In a moment of crisis, these women are caught in the articulation of patterns of caste, community and religious networks.

Feminists were pained when, during the communal incidents in Ahmedabad, women of different communities behaved as members of a community rather than as women (Chingari Nari Sangathan, 1986: 6). They articulated the responses of that particular group, speaking the language of caste and community, allowing themselves to be used as shields and even as victims of police excesses and molestations (Chingari Nari Sangathan, 1986). This is tantamount to

a failure on the part of the feminist discourse to induce a true understanding of the actual nature of patriarchal relations and their internalization of caste, communal, and religious responses, supportive of patriarchal structures of power. As one AWG puts it, it could respond to the issue of custodial rape both as a group and in the individual capacity of its members, because the issues involved, i.e. of state and police violence, were already articulated for them, in this case by the Marxist discourse. But, when it came to the question of how 'interpersonal relations, power relations within the family, and the whole dominance-submission relationship which is eroticized today had to be tackled, some of us were not sure where or how to begin' (Kannabiran and Shatrugna, 1986: 31).

This acknowledgement of the failure to confront the Indian reality with a truly feminist perspective for a genuine understanding of the ongoing workings of patriarchy, may explain why the women's movement failed to take the issues of the Shah Bano and Deorala sati cases to the mass of women. The hierarchization of political structures and of consequent power relations within the movement between urban/rural, educated/uneducated, middle-class/peasant, working class, liberal-enlightened/tradition-bound, English/non-English speaking, metropolitan/small town, and their implications for values, styles of work, etc. has to be accepted before a real confrontation with the issue of patriarchy and gender relations in the state is possible. As a commentator on the women's movement puts it

the claim of the women's movement, of working towards redefining politics and power-relations will be severely undermined unless it is able to demonstrate such a redefinition in its own functioning (Bakshi, 1986: 8).

The patriarchal Indian state versus ethnic nationalism

One other area in which the gender dimension of Indian government policy is particularly notable is that of inter-ethnic relations. Women continue to play a major role in various language-, region- and nationality-based movements. In the light of the state's overriding preoccupation with the unity and integrity of the nation, these various movements are dubbed anti-national or anti-state, and all the repressive forces of the state machinery (such as laws abrogating the fundamental rights of Indian citizens) are enforced, with the widespread use of the police and the military. North-East India, in particular, with its unique ethnic composition, has long been a fertile

ground for movements of various Adivasi groupings such as the Nagas, Mizos, and also for the non-Adivasi Assamese nationalities. Economic backwardness, colonial-type exploitation of the rich natural resources of the region by the Indian state, and inadequate representation of the State's interest by the national political parties and their local adherents are cited as some of the causes of these expressions of anti-state feeling.

The role of women in these movements links an anti-state with an anti-patriarchal thrust of political activity and women take part in such movements on a large scale, albeit generally in supportive roles.

Frequent allegations of rape, particularly by the army and police personnel, are an endemic feature of all these movements. Such allegations were made during the Naga movement of the '50s and '60s, during the Manipur and Assam movements (1979–85), the ongoing Bodoland movement and in the present phase of activities of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), all of which have been subject to state repression. Certain characteristics of these allegations are noteworthy. In the first place, they are not isolated actions. They are made in the context of army operations against subversives, whether guerrilla fighters or student agitations. They take place in remote inaccessible areas, forest villages, or hill villages. The victims are invariably poor, uneducated, Adivasi or poor peasant women. The rapes occur in conjunction with the torture and killing of villagers, the looting and burning of houses, or in the absence of their menfolk if they have run off to hide in the jungle fearing arrest.

Being outside of the operation of law because of their lack of education or of access to urban centres, the villagers have no means of redress. Urban-based civil rights groups, journalists, and other sympathetic groups have publicized their plight and helped them to approach the civil and military authorities in an attempt to ameliorate the situation.

The role of the Indian state in the context of such situations reveals its patriarchal bias not only against women but also against minority and Adivasi peoples. Except for the plains areas of Assam and Manipur, the generally Adivasi population of these areas are culturally cut off from the rest of India. The patterns of life in the region are quite different from those in the rest of the country. Women play a prominent part in cultivation, even in trading activities as in Manipur. There is no system of purdah. Women have sexual autonomy in choosing marriage partners and in matters of divorce. They move about freely in the market places and bazaars, and there is no prohibition to their public contact with men, whether of their own community or outside. Such comparative freedom is liable to be misconstrued by people belonging to the more patriarchal cultures of

India, who tend to have repressive ideas about women and sexual liberty. Indeed, these cultural differences are patronized by the Indian state by means of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. This provides for autonomy at the district level for the Adivasi people of the North-East in order to protect them from their culturally advanced neighbours, viz. the Hinduized plains people.

Following Independence, Adivasi states were carved out in the North-East with which the central government maintained a paternalistic relationship, directly carrying on the British colonial policy of isolating these people from the national mainstream. In the wake of modernization, the rapid development of education under the Christian missionaries, and the subsequent development of political consciousness and a sense of ethnic identity quite alien to the Indian ethos, ethnic movements began to assert their self-identity against the New Delhi regime. At this point, benevolent paternalism suddenly acquired a disciplinary edge. Article 355 of the Constitution was invoked to pass draconian laws suspending civil liberties and imposing military rule under the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958*. This covered the States of Assam and Manipur, and included the whole of the North-East, as the reorganization of the States had not taken place then.

The armed forces of the union of India are given special powers to deal with internal disturbances under Article 355. This act confers wide powers on the police and military officers to arrest without warrant any persons even suspected of having committed or believed to be about to commit a cognizable offence. Any premises can be searched without warrant for persons wrongfully confined and for arms, ammunition, and stolen goods.

Safeguards are provided. Thus, for instance, the army must work in conjunction with civil authorities, and must hand over any arrested persons without reasonable delay to the civil authorities. At the same time, however, protection is provided for persons operating under the *Act*, by means of a stipulation to the effect that the permission of the central government has to be obtained before starting legal proceedings against any person (i.e. employee of the state) in the exercise of the powers conferred by this *Act*. Thus, in the name of protecting the unity and integrity of the nation, blanket powers are conferred on the state to declare any area as disturbed (on the report of a Governor who is him/herself the agent of the Centre), and to revoke the fundamental democratic rights of the citizens.

It is in this context, where the state assumes extraordinary powers in order to stifle dissent, that frequent allegations of rape occur in villages where army or police undertake 'combing' operations. While the misuse of special powers by individuals may be termed as criminal

aberrations, the refusal of the military and state authorities to punish such offences or even to acknowledge the importance of ensuring due process of law, point to the real intentions that lie behind a façade of protection. The army and the civil authorities blatantly ignore such incidents unless a public outcry is raised or, as in the case of the Oinam issue, legal action is taken (Amnesty International, 1990: COCOI, 1989, 1990).

A striking fact is revealed by such cases in the North-East. The State's principal concern of maintaining the 'honour' and 'prestige' of the army by exonerating the culprits, far outstrips any concern to provide justice, or even to rehabilitate the victims. For instance, a statement from the Defence Ministry's press information bureau with reference to a report of the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) on 'Operation Bajrang' against ULFA activists (November, 1990) categorically states that

allegations of atrocities, rapes, ill-treatment and other such charges are therefore (because they have been working in conjunction with civil authorities) false and spread by the individuals with vested interests to malign popular image of army [CPDR 1991, 104].

At the same time, it must be pointed out that in volatile political situations, where there is an overlap of non-constitutional and constitutional methods of political struggle, the issue of rape tends to become politicized in ways that are by no means empowering to women. In the first place, the traditional image of woman as victim tends to be reinforced in the minds of both her 'protectors' and her 'ravishers', with emerging feelings of helplessness and desperation amongst groups which are unable to protect the 'honour' of their women. This failure is visited on the victims of rape who are socially ostracized, and the cycle becomes self-perpetuating, with the guilty going free.

A report written after a visit to areas where such incidents of rape were reported noted that it was frequently the vulnerability of victims who were poor and belonged to socially marginalized sections such as the Adivasis and tea-garden labour (in Assam) that led to such incidents. In cases where the intended victim was an educated woman, she might be better able to resist and summon help. A number of victims were very young girls who were particularly vulnerable. The victims and their families often failed to report rape cases, fearing social opprobrium, afraid of incurring the ire and retaliation of the rapists who were still at large, and also because they were too poor to travel to the nearest town to undergo a medical examination and lodge a complaint with the police. The areas in which such incidents occur are generally remote. Even when women's groups and political

parties *do* go to the help of such victims, they tend to embody the cultural attitudes prevalent in the patriarchal ethos of society and to see these women as 'subjects for rehabilitation' rather than as individuals in a live social context or 'as one of ourselves'.

The issue of rape has been used to mobilize women in political movements such as that of the Bodoland in Assam. The case of the alleged rape of Bodo Adivasi women in a forest village of Bhumuka of Kokrajhar district in Assam illustrates the way in which the issue of rape can become 'politicized'. The incident of gang-rape by personnel of the Assam police during the AGP's tenure of office was reported in March 1988, two months after its actual occurrence. This case first came to public notice when, for the first time in the annals of the Guwahati High Court, a '*suo moto*' notice was issued in the public interest against the Assam government on the basis of a PTI report on alleged police rape in Kokrajhar District (*Statesman*, Calcutta, 9 March 1988). Interestingly, only a few days later, the same High Court ordered an enquiry into 'alleged sexual exploitation' of women by Assam Rifles personnel in Qinam District (Manipur) which was then a 'disturbed area' under the provisions of the *Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958*, on a petition filed by the Manipur Baptist convention (*Statesman*, Calcutta, 24 March 1988).

In the case of the Bhumuka rape incident, the High Court directed the Assam Government to hand over the enquiry to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The court evidently did not believe that the State government could be entrusted with the conduct of the enquiry. According to newspaper reports, the incident took place when a contingent of Assam police had gone to the village to search for Bodo extremists. Though the event occurred in January, it was only in early March that organizations such as the AASU and Assam Jagrat Mahila Parishad (AJMP) publicized it (*Ajir Asom*, Guwahati, 7 March 1988). It was on the basis of these reports that the High Court had taken action.

These same organizations had played an active part in the Assam movement which had brought the AGP government to power. In recognition of the large-scale involvement of women in the movement, two women had been given AGP nominations out of 26 Assembly seats and one woman had been nominated for membership of the Rajya Sabha. When the Assam movement was under way, the rape of village women by the army in Kamrup district and the killing of an Adivasi woman by the Assam police during the tenure of the Congress (I) ministry, had been widely publicized and had served as a mobilizing platform for women (Misra, 1987). Significantly also, the two women MLAs of the AGP were of Adivasi origin, including one who was from the Kokrajhar region where the alleged rape incidents had

taken place. The opposition party (viz. Congress (I)) used the issue as a stick with which to beat the ruling AGP in the Assembly by calling for an adjournment motion (*Natun Dainik*, Guwahati, 19 March 1988).

The issue became a plank for mobilizing thousands for a mass rally against oppression of women, which was jointly organized by the AANMS and the All Assam Adivasi Women's Welfare Association (AATWA) (a women's wing of the Bodo organizations spearheading the movement for Bodo autonomy)" (*Ajir Asam*, Guwahati, 24 April 1988). Ironically, in the 1991 Assembly elections in Assam, the Bodo AGP woman member from Kokrajhar was unseated and the President of AATWA was elected as a member of the State Assembly independently on a Bodoland platform.

Thus women's entry into the problematic area of state politics cannot be simply seen as a matter of achievement of political rights (as envisaged by the democratic discourse), or as a corollary to her entrance into the sphere of social production (as in the Marxist discourse). It continues to be moulded by the politics of gender, as new strategies are evolved for the continuance of women's marginality and invisibility within patriarchal structures. Moreover, the liberationist thrust of the women's autonomous movement is being subsumed by the incorporation of women as the 'subject' of the discourse in nationalist, communalist, and even sectarian movements (Sarkar, 1991, 1991a).

An interesting version of the discourse on rape in the context of nationality movements in the North-East region is provided by the Assam movement (1979–85). In the course of the movement, allegations of rape were levelled against the army personnel conducting search operations. These reports received wide coverage in the regional press. Women's groups from the area and from as far afield as Bombay reported the incidents. One woman reporter belonging to the nationality in question was publicly branded 'unpatriotic' because she dared to suggest that the reports were biased against a particular community (A Special Correspondent, 1980: 735). A report in a Bombay weekly written by a woman associated with one of the foremost women's groups gave a graphic description of the situation (albeit at second or third hand), using the blanket term of 'molestation', which can cover any degree or kind of sexual assault and intimidation. It is all the better if the reporter is a woman.

Here is a woman, an ardent supporter of the nationality movement, an active participant who had even gone to Delhi as part of a women's delegation to meet the Prime Minister, who has provided an account in a women's magazine of the 'women's role in Assam's movement for

" Commonly referred to as the Bodoland movement.

preservation of national identity'. Describing a visit to the victims to offer relief and consolation, she comments that

we cannot yet forget the faces of the dishonoured daughters and daughters-in-law darkened by the insult [to their honour]. The victims [*Nimajita*, oppressed ones] should not be looked down upon, we should rather give them the honour due to martyrs. Because for the sake of their country they have surrendered what is dearer than life itself, their chastity [*sattitwa-sampad*]. When we explained matters in this way to the principal men and women of the village they agreed with us. The liberality of those simple, uneducated people is truly praiseworthy. [Bhattacharya, 1987: 26.]

Decoded, this passage reveals the following oppositions; urban/rural, honour/dishonour, national interest/individual interests. It also represents an interesting conjunction between 'modern' methods of applying political pressure, on the one hand, and strategy and traditional ideas of purity/pollution, on the other. The media and the political parties are quick to pick up on the sensational, politically useful aspects of rape even when the victims suffer all the indignities attendant upon their 'fallen' state, including social ostracism.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the Indian state, confronted by the growing alienation of large sections of the people, as evident in the mass-based 'democratic' popular movements of the '80s, has begun to manipulate gender yet again in order to preserve its power base. Non-violent Gandhian methods such as satyagraha, picketing, and silent processions continue to appeal (Sarkar, 1991, 1991a), largely to women. Indeed, women were present in the public arena in fairly large numbers during the '80s, although not in decisive and leading roles. 'Mobilization' has turned into 'participation', even as the simultaneous development of the autonomous women's movement has to some extent succeeded in the 'conscientizing' of 'toiling' women of the rural hinterland. The coming together of the Left and the AWMs proved to be mutually beneficial so far as turning 'mobilization' into 'participation' is concerned (Omvedt and Rao, 1988: 69). Even non-Left organizations (such as the Shetkari Sangathan in Maharashtra) have linked up with feminist activists in order to tap the vast potential for mobilization by creating a special women's platform, focusing on state oppression of women (Joshi, 1986; Omvedt 1986(a)).'

In order to check the growing militancy, particularly of the masses of rural women, the state is using both the carrot and the stick. On the one hand, it is attempting to co-opt women by shifting the focus in

As, for example, when Sharad Joshi took up the case of the victims of the Delhi riots of 1984 against the Sikhs

rural development programmes to women, both in the family household unit and through the so called 'Mahila Mandal' approach which hinges on the rural women's collective sense of identity. The adult literacy programmes are targeted towards women. The shift of focus to 'Mother and Child Health' (MCH) in family planning programmes is another indicator of such a trend. The much-publicized policy of 'empowerment of woman', with its subtle evocation of the '*shakti*' image of traditional lore is directed to women as 'voters'. Again, the policy of containment is clearly evident. As early as 1917, the Congress had defined the priorities in women's franchise to 'all collective bodies concerned with local government and education' (Sitaramayya, 1948: Vol. 1, 52).

The concept of Panchayati Raj with its 30 per cent reservation for women, even when offered in the guise of empowerment, is a barely concealed means of marginalizing women through co-option. Sponsoring Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Gandhi explained the objective of reservation for women as follows:

We believe the presence of women in large numbers in the Panchayats will not only make the Panchayats more representative but will also make them more efficient, honest, disciplined and more responsible. Third, it is the women of India, in their role as grandmothers and mothers who have been the repository of India's ancient culture and traditions. It is to them that is entrusted the responsibility of transmitting to the next generation quintessential values, standards and ideals which have enabled our civilization to survive and flourish without a break despite vicissitudes of many kinds. It is that strength of moral character which women will bring to the Panchayats. [Gandhi, 1989: 12-13.]

Here is Rajiv the son, speaking to the mothers who had vested power in him after the assassination of his mother. All the elements of the old patriarchal/ Gandhian argument are present in the text—the superior 'moral nature', the nurturant role of the 'responsible, efficient mother', and the 'glorious' Indian tradition on the maintenance of which so much depends. Small wonder then that feminists fear that Panchayati Raj will bring into existence a government of 'mothers-in-law', particularly as the members are to be selected and not elected. Similarly, V.P. Singh's National Commission for Women has been severely criticized by women as it contains no provision for autonomous functioning (Sarkar and Mazumdar, 1986: 59).

More important, however, is the way the state is subverting democratic processes by its attempts to manage movements of dissent. Profiting from Indira Gandhi's experience with the Emergency and its signal failure to stem the rising forces of democratic protest, her successors have taken to more subtle means to achieve the same ends.

Despite the fact that there may be violence in non-violent movements, they provide space for legal, 'constitutional' expressions of dissent, which are necessary for the growth of democratic institutions.

With the advent of overt violence into the Indian national political scene since 1984, women and other 'weaker' sections have become more and more marginalized. The failure of democratic methods leads to the communalization of politics, and different groups take up positions on ethnic and religious grounds in order to defend their interests. It is not only women but also Left and democratic forces who are finding it difficult to cope with the forces of communalism and fundamentalism. While speaking of 'dialogue' and 'accord' within the constitutional framework of consensus politics, the Indian state continues to strengthen its repressive apparatus. It promotes a situation of confrontation with dissenting groups, particularly among the younger sections of the population, thus bypassing constitutional means of struggle. Violence, both from dissenting elements and the state, becomes the order of the day.

The prevailing image of women today—particularly in situations of communal violence—is that of 'woman as victim' of police/army molestation (cf. Chingari Nari Sangathana, 1986) or of bereaved wives and mothers when men's lives are lost in communal violence. At the same time, women, and particularly women's 'honour', becomes a symbolic presence in group or community consciousness. The hard-won autonomy of women as political subjects, grown through a long process of struggle and self-assertion, becomes increasingly endangered.

Though the rising forces of communalism, fundamentalism, and the growing violence which mark the Indian political scene today signify a resurgence of patriarchal forces, the basic groundwork of solidarity and respect for democratic norms, built up during the decade of the women's movement, remains largely intact. The phase of spontaneity, of experimentation, so necessary in the initial stages for the movement to grow and to reach out from the middle-class enclaves to the masses of rural women, has been succeeded by a phase of steady determination to understand the workings of the structures of patriarchy and to create a new ideology, egalitarian in spirit and democratic in orientation. All this may be Utopian thinking, but the sense of woman's collective strength persists, despite the state and society's efforts to isolate woman, by imposing on her a privatized existence within the family and the community, and its narrow concerns.

Reflecting the fragmented nature of woman's existence, the movement may yet lack a coherent organizational structure and it is even doubtful whether a common platform will ever be possible. But the consciousness of oppression, the spirit of resistance, and the desire

for liberty informs all levels of society, infusing the movement with a quiet but steady determination to carry on the struggle on all fronts, both individually and collectively.

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India's International Role: • 4

Economic Dependence and Non-Alignment (1947–1991)*

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During the last four decades of its post-colonial history, India has undergone a transformation from a militarily and industrially weak power committed to an international orientation of 'self-reliance' in development to a regionally predominant and militarily strong power in which the 'national consensus' (Baru, 1983) on 'self-reliance' has broken down; from a power which seriously projected itself as an adherent of 'non-alignment' in the '50s and '60s into one which has become more and more closely aligned—on the one hand, to the USA and its allies in the sphere of economic development and, on the other, to the former Soviet Union in its geo-strategic orientation. In line with this twofold transformation, India's relationship with other non-aligned countries of the Third World in general and its South Asian neighbours in particular has undergone marked changes. Thus,

* This chapter was written before the Soviet Union ceased to exist. All references to the Soviet Union should be understood to relate to the period before December 1991. The substance of the chapter applies equally to the successor states.

India's gradual abandonment of its original line on 'self-reliance' has been accompanied by an emasculation of its 'non-aligned' stance (Harikumar, 1988), even though its strategic importance has given it some room for manoeuvre in its relations with the USA and its Western allies.

In this chapter I discuss the ideology of India's ruling classes during the post-independence phase with special reference to

1. how the concept of non-alignment fitted into it internationally, and
2. how it provided a crucial component of the image that they created for themselves *internally*.

The first section deals with the transition from a 'self-reliant' strategy inhibiting and restricting foreign involvement in India's capitalist development to one in which emphasis came to be placed on collaboration with foreign capital through a substantial expansion of aid and private sector (mainly consisting of Multinational/Transnational Corporations—MNCs or TNCs) sources of capital investment. This transition inevitably involved a qualitative change in India's relations with the West in general and the USA in particular, even although, surprisingly, this has not meant a dilution of the close relations between the Soviet Union and India (Rai, 1990; BM, 1986).

The second section considers the impact of the changes in India's development strategy (especially the international aspects) on its career as a non-aligned power in relation to other Third World countries. India's international orientation is viewed from a broad general perspective of the major contradictions engulfing the post-war world—the contradiction between the two superpowers (and their allies), the contradiction between the forces of imperialism and national liberation, and the contradiction between the states and communist parties of the socialist bloc (Sathyamurthy, 1983). In the last two years or so, the first of these contradictions has lost its ideological impact though not its real and potential significance in the sphere of *realpolitik*; the second contradiction has by no means abated, and may even be said to be intensifying in certain areas though it may appear to be receding in others; and the third contradiction is in the balance, though even here receding ideology would in all likelihood yield place to advancing *realpolitik* without much substantive change in the long-term relationship between significant powers and their allies.

The economic background

'Self-reliance' was adopted by the Congress as the main plank of India's economic (or, rather 'capitalist') development well before Independence. As a colony, structurally linked to the world capitalist

system and imperialist exploitation, India experienced colonial capitalism leading to the emergence of an indigenous capitalist class. This class demanded, during the twentieth century, a share of India's captive market then under the control of the British capitalist classes under the aegis of British colonial power (Chandra, 1966; Popov, 1984; Primkov, 1983). The struggle for control over the Indian market gave rise to a contradiction between the British colonial power and the Indian capitalist class. The transfer of power that took place in 1947 can be read as a negotiated settlement of this conflict.

The Indian industrial capitalist class had its gestation in a laboratory of economic change, peculiar to itself, imposed by the colonial power. Its emergence followed complex interactions between the colonial power and the trading, landed (represented by the new zamindar class), and usurious components of the propertied classes (which initially constituted a class of middlemen in facilitating the process of the East India Company's economic domination of India) that attained an established status by the beginning of the nineteenth century (Guha, 1982; Das Gupta, 1982; Bagchi, 1970). Far from disappearing as a mode of articulation of power in the countryside, pre-capitalist relations (i.e. feudal relations, in shorthand) of production gained a new lease of life. A number of features of pre-colonial rural society persisted in the new order, ushered into existence with the introduction of Permanent Settlement.

As has been noted by some scholars, the emergence of an Indian industrial capitalist class was neither rapid nor uniform nor complete, nor was it marked by a systematic understanding on its leadership's part of the political roots of its palsied infancy, adolescence, and youth (Chaudhury, 1984). In addition to these limitations, there were also others of a subjective kind stemming from the caste system, and the varied ethnic identities or nationalities of different segments of the rising Indian capitalist class. The incipient bourgeoisie of India was thus a heterogeneous class which consisted of disparate elements (e.g. Gujarati elements interested in industrial and foreign competition; Marwari merchants happier with traditional outlets such as trade and usury for their ingenuity; and latterly, the more substantial among the Indian princes who were steeped in feudal ways but nevertheless interested in dabbling in industrial investment) drawn from different social strata.

The Indian national bourgeoisie, at loggerheads with the colonial power, drew closer to the Indian National Congress (INC) which, under Gandhi's leadership, was emerging as an anti-imperialist mass movement seriously aimed at putting an end to British rule. For its part, the Congress was committed to a policy of rapid industrialization which it believed would not only benefit the capitalist classes but also raise the standard of living of the mass of the people. This strand of

economic thinking within the Congress was at variance with Gandhi's preference for a policy of industrialization modulated with primary emphasis laid on small-scale village-centred and self-reliant production leading to self-sufficiency on a local or regional basis. Nehru's commitment to some vague form of socialism, Jayaprakash Narayan's propagation of scientific socialism within a political framework of democracy, the Communist Party of India (CPI)'s programme of struggling towards proletarian revolutionary socialism, and the Indian national bourgeoisie's recognition of the important and indeed dominant role that the state would have to play in assuming control over the production process contributed to a nationwide political consensus on the path of economic development to be pursued after the departure of the colonial power.

During the early '30s and '40s, a strategy of economic development was evolved within the INC which elevated the concept of 'planned development' under the leadership of the state to the level of doctrine. Underneath the apparent rigidity of this framework were concessions unobtrusively made to the forces of '*realpolitik*' in economics. Thus, for example, even during the '30s, the Congress Party's Economic Affairs Committee admitted the possibility that the state might not be in a position to 'own' *all* the crucial means of production forming the bedrock of development, by taking recourse to a slight alteration of phrase, pregnant with meaning, by which 'the state shall own *or* control' (emphasis supplied) the means of production.

The major documents produced by the INC (and, especially, its National Planning Committee or NPC), until 1947, emphasized the supremacy of the state sector in the development of large-scale industries (e.g. power, fuel, iron and steel, etc.) and the need to control foreign companies and foreign vested interests. The Advisory Planning Board (APB), in its report to the interim government (December, 1946), while advocating state ownership and management of basic industries in principle, recommended in practice a combination of state capital and regulated private enterprise excluding foreign capital and removing foreign control. It also recommended, in the same breath, the temporary continuance of foreign management of highly specialized industries. A set of major contradictions was thus written into the Congress party's planning strategy from before Independence in its attempts to unite irreconcilable opposites in a single policy by yoking together large-scale industry and cottage industry, state ownership of the means of production and regulated private capital, state control over industry and toleration of monopolistic combinations, and exclusion of foreign capital in principle whilst yet making exceptions in practice.

The Industrial Policy Resolutions (IPR) of 1948 and 1956 were not

opposed to tolerating foreign capital as a means of importing industrial technique and technical knowledge. By the mid-'50s, principled opposition to foreign private capital had been relegated to the status of 'a hangover from the colonial past'. Within two decades of Independence, private foreign capital came to play a considerable part in the organized sector of the Indian economy. It would be correct to say that this trend had the effect of slowing down the process of reproduction of indigenous capital by depressing the rate of augmentation of national savings.¹

The resolution on the 'Problem of Economic Development', unanimously carried at the thirty-second annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI, March 1959), calling for 'very substantial' foreign investment, represented an important point of departure for a remoulding of India's economic policy.

Collaboration with foreign private capital was thus the new guideline for the Indian big bourgeoisie. From tax-farming and usury, through comprador and nationalist phases, the Indian bourgeoisie had finally arrived: at the pinnacle of political success it had deliberately sought the path of collaboration with international capital, under whatever necessary climate and terms. And the government obviously 'concur[red]' with this view. [Chaudhury, 1984: 19.]

Within the prevailing political discourse that marked the national consensus on economic development (a consensus to which, as has already been noted, almost all tendencies across the entire political spectrum, with the singular exception of the Swatantra Party, subscribed), 'self-reliance' and 'mixed economy' was central. The pragmatism underlying the actual policy pursued² by the government up to the Third Five Year Plan permitted fairly substantial deviations

¹ Even during the first two years of Independence the Indian government, at least partly in response to Western pressures in general and an appeal from Dr Henry Grady, the American Ambassador in particular, permitted foreign majority ownership of 14 new joint ventures (six of which involved American capital and the remaining eight involved British capital). Indeed, a report published by the Department of Commerce of the US Government in 1954 expressed the view that India was safer than many countries for certain types of US private investment (cited in Chaudhury, 1984). For their part, significant segments of the Indian bourgeoisie, which had demanded during the early '40s that foreign capital should be repatriated upon Independence (Birla (1950) for example), soon became converted to the opposite view (e.g. the FICCI Resolution of 1946 quoted in Chaudhury (1984: 18)).

² It is worth noting that, throughout its rule (1947–77 and 1980–9, and since 1991), the Congress party never had a single important economic minister who belonged to its left wing. Indeed, until 1957, the industrial, economic, commercial, and financial portfolios were in the hands of non-Congress ministers who were chosen for their acceptability to the national bourgeoisie (e.g. Sathyamurthy, 1989).

from the discourse adopted during the decade leading up to Independence by the Congress party and national bourgeoisie.

There was no indication whatsoever [in that pragmatism] of what we encounter so often today, namely a distaste for the public sector or a downgrading of indigenous technology; nor was there the contemporary penchant [*sic.*] for foreign capital and technology [Baru, 1983: 35].

An important characteristic of the Indian national bourgeoisie during the first two decades of the post-colonial era was its relatively undifferentiated and therefore apparently homogeneous character despite the unevenness of its development. Thus, conflicts of interest (which became increasingly acute from the '70s onwards) between a rising rural bourgeoisie (consisting of rich and middle peasant classes), on the one hand, and the Indian industrial bourgeoisie, on the other, had not yet surfaced in any significant measure throughout Nehru's Prime Ministership. So, too, differences between at least three distinct segments of the industrial bourgeoisie, viz. the very big industrial houses (e.g. Birla, Tata, etc.) with a continuous tradition stretching back to the early part of the century; the newly risen business houses (e.g. Ambani) which have burgeoned since the '60s at the initiative of industrialists with strong connections with TNCs/MNCs as well as, latterly, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) interested in investing in India; and industrialists who have established themselves as entrepreneurs of substance at the regional or State level in certain parts of India (Baru, 1990), were to await the further elaboration and ramification of Indian capital from the mid-'70s onwards (e.g. Scorpio, 1973).

During the first half of Nehru's Prime Ministership (1947–55), India pursued a relatively radical economic policy, the hallmark of which consisted of a containment of penetration by foreign capital and keeping multinational companies' subsidiaries at bay (whilst not closing the 'mixed economy'). A non-aligned foreign policy was pursued not only with the aim of increasing India's political autonomy in the sphere of international relations but also as a means of safeguarding its strategic independence and facilitating the conditions necessary for autonomous capitalist economic development. In this sense, non-alignment enjoyed a brief phase as a concept of substantive significance before it was reduced to a shibboleth towards the end of Nehru's Prime Ministership. The Indian business groups seized the opportunity provided by the respectability that 'collaboration', a new term of discourse, had gained in order to enter into agreements with MNCs/TNCs aimed at facilitating access to new technology and also at giving them an edge over their Indian competitors in the internal and external markets. The intra-bourgeoisie conflicts and differences, to which reference has already been

made, would soon begin to surface in the aftermath of the crises of the '60s, of which India's war with China (1962), the Indo-Pakistan war (1965), and the agricultural crisis (occasioned by the severe drought of 1965–7) were the most far-reaching and serious.¹

Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership, begun in a mood of political hesitancy if not despondency, felt the full economic impact of the crisis in which India had been plunged since the mid-'50s. The Indian economy had ceased to grow; it had become stagnant and retrogressed to an alarming degree by the end of the '60s. This is not the appropriate place to discuss the question in detail (Patnaik and Rao, 1977; Patnaik, 1981), but it is important to note that the government's response to the endemic stagnation of the economy was to lurch towards a radical solution (1969–73) with the aid of slogans and shibboleths as well as a little military adventure across the eastern frontier in Bangladesh. This new radical posture was dictated mainly by the political crisis that was brewing in the wake of the agricultural crisis of the mid-'60s, the military crisis of 1962–5, and the industrial crisis from 1965 onwards. However, the new radicalism did not surface until *after* the rupee was devalued and import policy liberalized under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Even so, despite the fact that radicalism was confined to the sphere of formula and sloganeering, India did make some headway in the economic field, mainly through cooperation with the Soviet Union in defence, trade, and capital goods (Baru, 1983: 40; Rai, 1990).

In reality, the social crisis engulfing the state, which was exacerbated by economic stagnation, continued to intensify. The Indira Gandhi (Mark I) government's response to the mounting problems of the mass of the people was to make a clear choice in favour of the dominant classes (Bhambri, 1982, 1985) by abruptly reversing the terms of reference of its economic policy in the direction of 'liberalization' (with its concomitants of 'export orientation', 'pragmatism', 'competition', 'efficiency', etc.) and away from the broad consensus underlying the first three Five Year Plans.

At the same time, the government seemed to admit that the state had come to the end of its economic tether in the succour that it could continue to give the national bourgeoisie and that a stage had been reached at which only vast injections of foreign aid, loans, and capital could sustain it domestically and internationally. During this new

¹ The rapidity with which certain segments of the Indian bourgeoisie abandoned the principle of 'self-reliance' was reflected in the rate at which collaboration agreements multiplied from a total figure for the period 1948–55 of 284 to 796 for the period 1956–60, and an annual average figure of 300–400 throughout the '60s (Baru, 1983; Rao, 1975; Subramanian, 1973; Elbridge, 1969; Chandra, 1977; Kurian, 1966; Reserve Bank of India, 1968; Rao, 1975).

phase of 'liberalization' the state would, presumably, assume responsibility for squeezing greater and greater surplus in the form of labour from industrial and agricultural workers. Accordingly, the government showed itself to be ready to impose a draconian internal Emergency, to such an effect on the mass of the people which had been accustomed, thanks to the system of 'bourgeois parliamentary democracy' prevailing for nearly three decades, to a keen consciousness of democratic civil liberties (Rajagopalan, 1975–6).

The terms of discourse, with special reference to economic policy, thus underwent a dramatic and fundamental shift in order to enable the Indian bourgeoisie to make up for the long-term stagnation of the domestic market by seeking external markets. Such a shift of priorities required that concessions should be given to foreign capital in general and US Multinationals in particular, and 'structural adjustments' stipulated by the IMF should be carried out (Sau, 1983). The justification given for the turnaround of economic policy was that it provided access to foreign technology as well as creating conditions under which Indian business houses (as well as high technology-using state enterprises such as BHEL) as (junior) partners of MNCs/TNCs, would be in a position to enter external markets.¹

Neither the Indian state nor the Indian national bourgeoisie has been in a position to mould to its own advantage any of the key factors influencing the terms of investment by MNCs/TNCs in India, viz. technology, markets, and finance. Even the former's power to withhold permission from specific joint ventures has been used only sparingly—more daringly by the Janata government (1977–9) than by either its Congress(I) predecessor or successors—the Indira Gandhi (Mark I), the Indira Gandhi (Mark II), and the Rajiv Gandhi governments. Throughout the '80s, the Indian economy experienced a deepening integration with foreign technology and foreign capital (Sathyanurthy, 1985) and became susceptible to international economic fluctuations over which it could exercise no control whatsoever.

So much so that the Rajiv Gandhi government could be said to have presided over the liquidation of non-alignment in foreign relations in exchange for its economy becoming more deeply enmeshed than ever

¹ Both independently of these developments and as a spin-off, Indian capital has, for a few decades now, invested in foreign countries to a significant degree. Here lies a paradox. On the one hand, the Indian bourgeoisie (both its national industrial and its agricultural sectors) has not been able to fire the engines of classical capitalist development despite the enormous amount of help given by the Indian state. On the other, despite considerable distortions occasioned by the penetration of foreign capital under various pretexts (and latterly with the active cooperation of the state), the capitalist class of India has established itself with some degree of success as a penetrating force in its external relations (Morris, 1987; DN, 1988; BM, 1977; Dutt, 1980).

before in the international capitalist system. This was indeed the logical result of following the recommendations of a majority of the Tandon Committee advocating, among other measures, export-led growth, liberalization of imports, and establishment of Special Economic Zones which the Janata and Indira Gandhi (Mark II) governments extended to permit the formation of numerous joint ventures between MNCs/TNCs and Indian capital.

It is important to note that the Indian market for industrial and consumer goods expanded to cover a large segment of the urban and rural population (of a rough order of magnitude of five per cent of the total population at Independence to well over sixty per cent in the late '70s and early '80s). Even so, the thirst for market expansion of Indian capital extended beyond the confines of India to include other parts of South Asia. By the same token, the intensification of the dependence of Indian capital on international capital is reflected in the subordinate role played in these markets by Indian manufacturing houses in the multinational combines of which they are part. India's subcontinental outlook is thus conditioned by the relationship between Indian manufacturing houses and their multinational partners.

The Janata government's policy of opening its arms to foreign capital was, however, interleaved with a recognition on its part of the political clout enjoyed by the rich and middle peasantry both in the regions and more recently at the Centre as well, on the one hand, and on the other, with giving small industry and regional production greater financial and other material encouragement.³ This general policy orientation of the Janata government received its most emphatic *imprimatur* in the *Draft Sixth Five Year Plan* produced under the aegis of the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government.

Baru's periodization of the 1974–7 and 1980–4 intervals as constituted by a 'Conservative Phase' (interrupted to a limited degree by the Janata government's 'idiosyncratic' policies in relation to agriculture and small-scale industry, though these policies were by no means abandoned in subsequent years) is essentially justified (Baru, 1983). So too has been the regime of the Rajiv Gandhi government, though it must be pointed out that its concentration on the next century (at least until a year or so before its defeat at the polls in 1989) to the exclusion of the problems posed by the remainder of the present century

³ This recognition assumed the concrete form of granting increases in procurement prices of foodgrains, lowering taxes, and generally mollicodding them in the spheres of economic policy and Centre–State relations (e.g. Gill, 1990). For a contrary view arguing that there is no significant contradiction between the interests of the major segments of capital, see Vanaik (1990). I do not find the position advanced by Vanaik (especially chapters 1–3 and 5) persuasive.

(Sathyamurthy, 1985), largely alienated the sympathies of the agricultural classes.

It should be of interest to note that the National Front government (1989–90) came to power at a time when the internal contradictions of the Indian national bourgeoisie were at a crossroads yet again: not the least among them being those between the agrarian accumulating classes and the industrial bourgeoisie, and between the different levels of accumulation within the national industrial bourgeoisie—proliferated into the old-fashioned big bourgeoisie, and the newly risen segments of it that are closely integrated to MNCs/TNCs, and small and regionally ensconced segments of industry (on the point of rapid expansion in order to facilitate the reproduction of capital at these levels which feel threatened by MNCs and look up to the state for assistance) (Bhambri, 1985; Patnaik, Chandrasekhar, and Sen, 1994). This state of affairs can be expected to prevail for the foreseeable future.

The National Front (NF) government's way of handling the crisis (as indeed that of its successors since November 1990) was characterized by a certain lack of clarity, to say the least. The lobby within the cabinet favouring closer ties between Indian industry and MNCs/TNCs was powerful. It included, in the case of the NF government, not only economic ministers such as Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan, and K.P. Unnikrishnan but also Ajit Singh, the Minister for Industry, who had his initiation in politics as heir-apparent of Chowdhury Charan Singh, the first uncrowned king of modern India's rich and middle peasantry. At the same time, the interests of the rich and middle peasantry were effectively represented by the Janata Dal ministries in Gujarat, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh led by Chief Ministers Chimanbhai Patel, Laloo Prasad Yadav, and Mulayam Singh Yadav as well as (intermittently) Devi Lal, the Haryanvi rich peasant leader.

If these two major economic forces are in a state of potential conflict and antagonistic competition at the heart of the Indian state, the Planning Commission for the first time in post-colonial history viewed its role under the National Front government, as more ideological than technocratic in character. The Members of the Planning Commission under the National Front government (with a single bureaucratic exception) were essentially academics, intellectuals, and practitioners with a commitment to India's autochthonous development at different levels. It would appear that they viewed development as going beyond the limits imposed by economic growth (as modernization) *per se*, and as being made up of a complex package of social, economic, political, educational, and other inputs aimed at improving the quality of life of the people as a whole. Gandhism also re-entered the sphere of thinking about development in a significant

way. Even though the members of the Planning Commission resigned *en masse* when the National Front government was brought down in November 1990, their immediate successors did little to alter the general orientation of the organization. More recently, however, the Planning Commission has begun to play second fiddle to the 'liberalizers' who have taken charge of the economy in the Congress I minority administration which took power in July 1991.

Far from being a facilitator of the main thrust of the National Front government's economic policy, the Planning Commission had, within a few months, come to assume the role of loyal opposition (as reflected in its *Approach Document*) and drew attention boldly to the long-term adverse consequences of the general drift of economic policy (tailored to suit the requirements of the IMF) of the last 15 years or so, which the government would appear to have endorsed on the whole in its recent *Industrial Policy Statement*. At least some of the dangerous aspects of these consequences (such as arable land being diverted from cultivation of food crops that are staple for poorer people to cultivation of exportable crops such as soyabeans) are now being canvassed articulately (Abrol, 1983).

The last four decades have thus witnessed the emergence of a number of socio-economic forces which have favoured the penetration of foreign capital and technology into the Indian economy against a backcloth of the struggles waged by different segments of the mass of the population which have suffered oppression at the hands of the dominant classes in industry and agriculture, on the one hand, and the coercive wings of the state apparatus (i.e. the police, para-military and military forces) and its bureaucracy, on the other. The democratic struggles of the people have continued unabated in the face of measures taken by the state against workers, poor peasants, agricultural labour, Adivasis and others; they have embraced a whole variety of economic and political issues directly involving the World Bank, IMF, and MNCs/TNCs (e.g. the Narmada project; the exploitation of the Kumaon region, etc.).

India's external orientation

In this section an interpretation is offered of India's international role and, in particular, its relations with its neighbours in the light of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the economic relations between the Indian state and the West, on the one hand, and on the other, between the different sections of the Indian bourgeoisie and international capital (Wilson, 1990).

Independent India's international relations can be usefully periodized along the following lines:⁶

1. 1947–1966

The initial phase of consolidation of the Indian state, in the aftermath of Partition and the accompanying trauma, was followed by a period of gestation of the Congress party's reorientation of India's international strategy culminating in the adoption of a non-aligned stance towards the protagonists of the first major contradiction in the world, i.e. that between socialist and capitalist–imperialist countries led respectively by the Soviet Union and the United States.

2. 1966–1984

The development of the Indian state as a powerful instrument for advancing the interests of the ruling classes whilst mouthing socialist shibboleths; the projection of India as perhaps the only major non-socialistic Third World country capable of sustaining a relatively independent stance in international relations despite, paradoxically, the deepening dependence of its economy on international, multinational, and transnational capital; and, an emasculation of the ideological content of non-alignment in favour of the advantages in *realpolitik* terms that it had to offer as a political posture. This period also witnessed the emergence of India as a dominating regional power in South Asia, mainly through the approval that the Indian government won for its policies from the United States.

3. 1984–1989

Attempts were made during the Rajiv Gandhi government's tenure by the third generation of nationalist leaders (a number of these leaders moved, during the late '80s, into the opposition which briefly wielded power under the banner of the National Front) to cut through the emerging contradictions within Indian society as a whole, and among the different segments of the ruling classes in particular, in a rash bid to pilot India into the twenty-first century (Sathyamurthy, 1985); and the shifts in international alignments and orientations that they necessarily entail.

There is a strong tendency in Indian intellectual (including communist and left wing) circles to make an artificial distinction between India's international orientation and domestic policies, invariably praising the latter uncritically whilst being rather more or less objectively critical of the latter. The succession to the Prime Ministership of the country (with the two brief interruptions of Lal Bahadur Shastri's tenure, 1964–6; and the Janata rule, 1977–80), during the

⁶ For a similar periodization with special reference to India's political economy, see Baru (1983, 46).

period 1947–89, of three members of different generations of the same family has obscured the vision of those who attempt to mould public opinion through their control of the media. Hagiography of the Nehru dynasty in the Indian press has acquired monumental proportions and, with it, a tendency to invest India's foreign policy with a continuity, consistency, and constancy, over time which tends to underestimate the changing dynamics of India's internal policy and, inextricably linked with it, its international orientation (Sathyamurthy, 1991).

*First phase: search for political autonomy
within a framework of economic dependence*

Our point of departure in this analysis must be the presence of a genuinely anti-imperialist strand in the ideology of the Indian nationalist struggle as embodied in the Congress movement (which is consistent with the INC's commitment to self-reliance in economic development); at the same time, it had an international character embracing the entirety of the world under the colonial, racial, and imperial domination of Western powers, and linking India's struggle for independence with the struggle for independence of colonial peoples throughout the world. Those among the Congress leaders who gave voice to anti-imperialism in this context were generally (but not exclusively) drawn from the left of the political spectrum.

But this, when viewed in conjunction with the powerful drive of the Indian nationalist movement as a whole (on the national as well as the regional scene) to a capitalist path of development of the Indian economy (with the state playing a vital role in creating conditions congenial for its realization), would point to a differentiated approach on the part of the ruling class to independent India's external and domestic goals. Foreign policy, despite claims of propagandists to the contrary, had to serve the imperatives of India's economic choices on the domestic front.

Until the actual moment of independence dawned, the Indian national leadership could afford to behave as though an independent anti-imperialist foreign policy after the end of colonial rule could be combined with a policy of safeguarding the interests of capitalist classes in India which could not be developed without dependence on foreign capital. It was in the ambience of this general contradiction between the domestic goal that the nationalist movement set itself, on the one hand, and its international aim, on the other, that political discourse in India gave birth to shibboleth socialism. A division of labour developed between left wing leaders (led by Nehru) taking

charge of foreign policy pronouncements and undertaking the task of projecting India's image on the international scene, and leaders who controlled the organization of the Congress party who assumed responsibility for the complex task of determining priorities for economic development and devising ways and means of achieving political penetration nationally and locally.

During the first phase of our periodization, however, the Left forces outside the Congress party stood weakened and divided. The CPI suffered a body blow as a consequence of its decision to adopt the Soviet line on the war without regard to the opposition of the Indian masses to British imperialism which the INC had successfully mobilized. In the long drawn-out nemesis that followed the CPI's betrayal of the mass of the Indian people (or, so it was portrayed with remarkable success by the Congress leaders, and especially Gandhi), it was unable to spread its political influence beyond the few regions and industrial cities where it already had a mass base or enjoyed popular support and was therefore well entrenched.

After Independence, the CPI followed the disastrous international line of the Soviet leadership by grossly underestimating the popular character of the Congress, on the one hand and, on the other, the determination of the post-colonial Indian state to cut communism down to size in independent India. The tragedy of Telangana, resulting in oppression on a scale hitherto unprecedented even by colonial standards and the exposure of the utter ideological confusion within the ranks of the communist leadership, led to a further weakening of the CPI.

During the interim between its revolutionary defeat in Telangana at the hands of the Indian state and its first parliamentary victory at the polls in Kerala (1957), the CPI leadership was really in no position to provide a clear indigenously based analysis of political trends and tendencies in India as a whole without removing the Soviet shadow from its ideological field of vision. It is necessary to make this point because there is no other way of accounting for the failure of the CPI to make a greater impact on India's domestic policy than by analysing its role in politics during the heyday of Nehru's influence.

Lacking a credible challenge from the left of the Congress party, its own left wing addressed the task of defining the international role of independent India. Yet, it was not until eight years after independence that the Indian government hit on a systematically formulated global foreign policy strategy emphasizing non-alignment (of course, defined dynamically rather than in the static stance of European inter-war and post-war neutral powers) as a goal to be jointly pursued with other post-colonial countries as well as states (e.g. Latin American states) seeking to release themselves from the stranglehold of US domination.

Whilst President Truman had shown himself to be impervious to (if not altogether contemptuous of) the political aspirations of independent India, representatives of American business left little to the imagination of the visiting Indian Prime Minister (1950) about what the United States expected of new post-colonial states. Eisenhower, Dulles, and Nixon—that triumvirate which took charge of American policy in 1953—demanded not only political alignment but also military involvement.

By the same token, Stalin continued to distrust the parties of nationalism and independence in the colonial world as bourgeois and petit bourgeois lackeys of imperialism. The Soviet leadership was particularly suspicious of the INC. Thus, even when India sought to demonstrate its independence of the major powers of the world by intervening in the Korean conflict (both inside and outside the United Nations) against the United States government and South Korea, and on the side of North Korea and China, the Soviet Union persisted in its unwillingness to give India the benefit of the doubt that, on balance, it represented an anti-imperialist force in international relations.

It would not be an incorrect characterization of the main desiderata of India's foreign policy to say that, during the first eight years of independence, they consisted mainly of a friendly diplomatic and economic (i.e. foreign economic and food aid) relationship with the United States and the Western world. There was no overt interference in the freedom of the Indian state to formulate and execute its own international aims, a relationship between the Soviet Union and India concentrating more on the political and diplomatic planes than on the economic and military–security planes, and a gradual realization of India's potential as a leading power in Asia and among the newly independent nations of the world. The first two of these at least were entirely in consonance with the economic position of India and the high degree of dependence of the national bourgeoisie on the Indian state for their development.

India's friendly overtures to China during this period, despite internal friction over the political and legal status of Tibet and India's unhappiness over China's 'cartographic aggression' of Indian territory in certain areas to the south of the McMahon line, led to a crystallization of India's foreign policy goals *vis-à-vis* Third World countries in the form of the *Panch Shila* agreement that rapidly acquired the status of a blueprint for diplomatic relations between friendly countries which claimed that they had no ideological or political axe to grind.

India's foreign policy during the first decade of independence—at any rate, until the emergence of the Khrushchev/Bulganin leadership

in the Soviet Union, with a radically new policy intended to break the mould of Stalin's international policy—cannot be fully appreciated without sufficient awareness of the all-out effort made by the government and the ruling party to smash the CPI where (as in Telangana) it reared its revolutionary head and to wave the carrot of assimilation towards it where (as in Andhra Pradesh after 1953, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura) it was within inches of winning executive power at the State level through participation in parliamentary elections.

For, those in control of the power of the Indian state were clear in their principal objective of safeguarding the interests of the Indian national bourgeoisie consisting of a nascent industrial capitalist class dependent upon the (relatively autonomous) state to set it on course, and a rising rural capitalist (or agrarian bourgeois) class which was fast supplanting the old feudal rich and landlord class in the countryside. This point has already been elaborated upon in the previous section.

Judged against these aims, India's overtures to the West must be said to have failed by and large, and the only (but, in its own terms, by no means inconsiderable) policy gain during this period consisted of India's ability to keep its foreign relations relatively free of external interference. That a country in which state power was still in no more than an embryonic form, let alone fully elaborated, and which felt its security threatened by an unfriendly power on both its north-western and eastern flanks, displayed a determination not to compromise its autonomy and independence in the sphere of international relations constitutes a remarkable feature of post-colonial India's foreign policy during the first decade of its existence. Ironically, this position was to be reversed during a future phase of development of India's international role when it would achieve greater economic standing with the aid of foreign capital and wider acceptance among the Western powers in general and the United States in particular.

It was only natural that, under these circumstances, India should seek systematic cooperation with Afro-Asian countries of varying political hues (ranging from those in revolutionary contradiction with the forces of imperialism through national liberation struggles against it and its local allies to non-socialist and indeed anti-socialist/anti-Communist countries which were willing to pay lip-service to the notion of autonomy in the sphere of foreign policy) as one of the leading forces—along with China—favouring a new and dynamically non-aligned approach to international relations. As a counterpoint to this development in 1954, the domestic political scene in India witnessed the unveiling of the 'socialist pattern of society' at the Avadi session of the Congress party's annual conference in 1955.⁷

⁷ It is useful to remember that the main resolution heralding the 'socialist pattern of society' was moved by none other than C. Rajagopalachari who, only two years earlier,

If the first half of this phase of the development of its foreign policy ended in triumph, with India playing an important role in the Geneva Conference (1954),⁸ the second half terminated in the crippling aftermath of the tragedy and shame that followed India's hasty military intervention in the crisis affecting its relationship with China when it became suddenly inflamed in the aftermath of the conflict in which Tibet became engulfed (1959). Indian opinion (with the exception of that voiced by a section of the CPI leadership which split off from the parent body in order to form the influential and powerful CPI(M) in 1964) is accustomed to referring to the Sino-Indian conflict (October 1962) as 'China's invasion of India' or 'China's unprovoked aggression against India'.

In actuality, however, China had consistently adopted the stance that—where there was a genuine difference of opinion or dispute (as was indeed the case at a number of points along the north-eastern and north-western borders of India with China which had arisen from the colonial period onwards) between neighbours sharing an anti-imperialist orientation in common (irrespective of the character of their social systems)—agreement should be sought through discussion and compromise, whilst overt conflict should at all costs be avoided.⁹ But the Indian leaders (and especially Nehru and Krishna Menon)—until 1962, noted for their tireless rhetoric against imperialism and war—precipitated an armed conflict instead of accepting China's oft-repeated offer to negotiate.¹⁰

Lacking in military and strategic intelligence, woefully unprepared for military action, oblivious of China's aims and the logic underlying them, and armed with a few hack, rusty, and conventional bourgeois ideas on sovereignty and national security acquired during their apprenticeship at Cambridge and the London School of Economics, the two main architects of non-alignment—Prime Minister Nehru

had declared communism to be India's Enemy No. 1. As long as the state was prepared to play the role of handmaiden to the capitalist class, the Congress party would be prepared to support planned development and mixed economy which lay at the heart of the socialist pattern manifesto.

⁸ Even the British Conservative Prime Minister Anthony Eden (1960) paid warm tribute to India's role in the Geneva Conference.

⁹ Ironically, India was as unprepared to negotiate as it was to fight. Yet, it was prepared to provoke conflict by plunging hastily into armed action across disputed areas against a power that was extremely well armed and well prepared for military action at high altitudes.

¹⁰ After having been helpless spectators, across the border, of Chinese road-building operations at a high altitude, involving huge retinues of workers and the presence of vast detachments of the Chinese armed forces, it was an astonishingly foolish venture for India to have ordered a sudden attack against the Chinese. The political and military miscalculation involved in the decision was simply mind-boggling.

and Defence Minister Krishna Menon (whose forensic brilliance was often mistaken for originality of thinking in politics)—plunged into military action calculated 'to remove Chinese aggression from Indian territory' and 'to teach China a lesson'. In other words, they treated China on a level with Portugal, Aksai Chin on a par with Goa. Beneath the sheen of non-alignment and anti-imperialism lurked shop-worn notions of territorial integrity and national security which, de-linked from protestations of peace and non-violence, rendered the Indian leaders vulnerable and exposed the weakness of the Indian state.

During the second half of the first phase of the development of its international role, India—more than China—became the main beneficiary in South Asia of the new thrust given to Soviet foreign policy by Stalin's successors.. Indeed, non-alignment and closer Indo-Soviet ties developed side by side. Soviet approval of India, under the aegis of the Congress party, as an important, progressive, stable, anti-imperialist force, clearly added to India's international stature and compelled Western powers in general and the United States in particular (especially after Dulles) to undertake a reappraisal of their attitude towards non-alignment.

By the same token, the Indian government acquired a kind of immunity for its policy (on balance) of repression against the CPI (and especially against the CPI(M) after the 1964 split). At the same time, a section of the ageing leadership of the communist movement was forced by new developments in the sphere of state-to-state relations between India and the Soviet Union to reorientate its attitude to the Indian state and the party in control of its power without looking up to the Soviet party for ideological guidance on domestic and international questions.

India's ties with the Soviet Union actually contributed to a hastening of the process of division within the Indian communist movement which ultimately led to the emergence of a strong, nationalistically orientated communist party—the CPI(M)—equidistant from (or should we say *between*) the two main socialist protagonists in the third major contradiction of the post-war world, viz. that between socialist countries of the world arising out of radically opposed understandings of the correct ideological line on the construction of socialism espoused by the Soviet and Chinese parties.

Towards the end of the first phase of our periodization, India had two hostile powers instead of one (as at its commencement) across its borders. It had also established a reputation for small time regional Big Power chauvinism in its relations with other Afro-Asian powers in general and its small neighbours (e.g. Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sikkim, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Burma) in particular. India's feeling of superiority stemmed from the confidence that its leaders felt in their

knowledge of how imperialist and other metropolitan powers were accustomed to conducting international political relations!

By the time Lal Bahadur Shastri became Prime Minister, the development of state power in India had taken such a course as to indicate that, whilst the government was well placed to repress the workers and peasants (i.e. the mass of the people), it by no means had the strength needed (or, for that matter, even the willingness) to prevent dissent based in regional centres of power (i.e. the States, especially on the periphery), or to avert the horizontal contradiction fast developing within the Indian ruling classes between the industrialists (who demanded that greater amounts of surplus should be transferred from agriculture to industry as a matter of course), on the one hand, and a rising class of rich and middle peasantry (owing its growing influence mainly to the modernization of agriculture under the patronage of the state), on the other (Sathyamurthy, 1989a).

By virtue of his own background, Nehru's successor was able to represent the strand in the Congress movement which was responsive to the interests of the dominant rural classes. He was able to divert attention from domestic unrest (manifested in the form of various language demonstrations, especially in the south, and popular reaction to near-famine and drought conditions in various parts of the country), by engaging successfully in an Indo-Pakistan war (1965). At the same time, he was able to give India's relations with its immediate and small neighbours, as well as other small nations in South-East Asia and elsewhere, a refreshingly egalitarian touch.

But the passing of Nehru had already marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of state power in India. India's orientation of foreign policy was to be modified in accordance with the imperatives governing the emergence of an extremely powerful state under Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership. The overall interest of her regime lies in the fact that the strengthening of the sinews of the Indian state was carried out in an economic environment of deepening dependence of Indian capital on multinational and international capital.

Second phase: transformation of non-alignment (1966–84)

The second phase of our periodization divides conveniently into three distinct sub-periods:

1. The first six years (1966–72), during which the power of the Indian state was brought under the control of a refurbished Congress

party with Indira Gandhi as the leader; India scored its first clear victory over Pakistan and established itself as a major regional power *de facto* by playing a vigorous and decisive role in the struggle for independence of Bangladesh; and a close relationship between India and the Soviet Union was forged.

2. The 1972–7 period, during which electoral success was sought to be converted into authoritarian rule under an internal Emergency which was declared when the Prime Minister's political authority as a democratically elected head of government was put at risk as a consequence of judicial pronouncements at Allahabad and Delhi; and India's international involvements which, interestingly, were kept on a low key, whilst the coercive power of the state had reached a higher level than ever before.

3. The Janata interregnum and Indira Gandhi's (Mark II) administration which, from a foreign policy perspective, constituted a more or less continuous phase in the development of a new look for non-alignment by the Indian leadership—first under Atal Behari Vajpayee's Foreign Ministership, and subsequently under Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership.

During the initial phase of consolidation of her hold over the Congress party, Indira Gandhi was faced with a clear choice between continuing the general approach to India's foreign policy adopted by her immediate predecessor (concentrating rather greater attention on fostering good (i.e. more equal) relations with small neighbours), and elaborating her father's orientation to non-alignment under the changed circumstances of ideological polarization and contradiction in the world between the forces of imperialism and the forces of national liberation (of which the Indo-Chinese wars of national liberation against American imperialism constituted the most serious manifestation). The ruling party, in the aftermath of the Kamaraj plan, was dominated, to an even greater extent than before, by right wing (to put it crudely, anti-Soviet if not altogether pro-American) elements, whilst Indira Gandhi's hold over the party as fledgeling Prime Minister was far from firm.

Lacking an ideological approach to international relations (in this respect she represented the very antithesis of her father) and instinctively opposed in her orientation towards the politics of national liberation movements, she was even known to have wavered in her support for the North Vietnam government and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam during the latter part of the '60s.¹¹ But,

¹¹ When Ho Chi Minh died in 1969, it was the second United Front government in West Bengal that took the initiative in marking the event befittingly, while the Government of India lagged behind in identifying itself with the departed leader. This strong identification with the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation on the part of

so far as the East-West (i.e. Soviet–American) contradiction was concerned, the Indian government under Indira Gandhi's stewardship attempted to revert, as far as possible, to the status quo that prevailed prior to the Sino-Indian hostilities of October 1962.

This task of reorientation was complicated by the fact that, during the intervening period, the United States had begun to exercise an influence of no inconsiderable magnitude on a number of aspects of the development of the power of the Indian state, ranging from the supply of small arms and extension of networks of communication into the interior to the introduction of counter-insurgency and anti-personnel techniques in the police and para-military organs of the state (e.g. Verma, 1974). The intransigence shown by those in control of the power of the Indian state (not least among them the Prime Minister herself) towards anti-imperialist and incipient national liberation forces *within* India (Banerjee, 1990) was reflected in the rather detached political view assumed by the government towards international manifestations of national liberation struggles (especially in Indo-China) while paying lip service to anti-imperialist sentiments.

Indira Gandhi's apparent lurch to the left during the interval between the 1969 split within the Congress party and the adroitly timed general election (1972), was dictated to a far greater extent by political opportunism than by ideological conviction. Measures of a more cosmetic than substantive, let alone fundamental, character—such as the nationalization of fourteen banks, emasculation of the Privy Purses of the ageing remnants of princely India, and the nomination of an orthodox representative of organized Indian labour (in preference to a rich peasant) as the Presidential candidate of the refurbished and newly pruned ruling party—were briskly followed by India's armed intervention in 1971 (aimed as much against the state of Pakistan as against the revolutionary elements in the national liberation movement inside Bangladesh) on the side of the Awami League leadership.

India's military intervention in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh was motivated by two principal considerations. First, Pakistan's conduct towards its eastern wing provided India with a convenient stick with which to beat a recalcitrant neighbouring power. As during

the CPI(M) in West Bengal and its leadership was remembered thirty years later when, during his visit to Ho Chi Minh City (1990), Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of the Left Front government of West Bengal, was accorded 'Head of State' treatment by special decree of the Government of Vietnam. More recently (1991), the West Bengal government took the initiative in remembering the birth centenary of Ho Chi Minh in Calcutta at a huge mass function attended by Chandra Shekhar, the then Prime Minister

the Indo-Pakistan hostilities in 1965, so too in 1971 the Indian state sought to consolidate its power by destabilizing Pakistan, in this instance by helping the process of amputating its eastern wing altogether.

Second, and much more central to the developing internal political dynamic of India itself, the timing of the Indian military's physical occupation of Bangladesh was dictated by the urgency of preventing the anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces of national liberation from gaining a foothold *inside* Bangladesh territory and society. For, a fully-fledged national liberation movement, engaged in a protracted struggle in a neighbouring society on the eastern threshold of India, would set off reverberations of unpredictable portent which would inevitably result in a destabilization of the politically sensitive areas spanning the entire eastern and north-eastern regions of the country. Such a development would be bound to undermine the grasp of state power in India by the national parties representing the interests of the Indian ruling classes.

Defying American resistance and correctly judging the Soviet Union's friendly acquiescence in India's programme of expanding its sphere of influence eastward (which was signified by its willingness to enter into a twenty-year treaty of friendship with India, now renewed (1991) for another period of twenty years despite changes in Soviet foreign policy), Indira Gandhi struck the fatal blow which not only decisively altered the internal balance of power of the subcontinent but also set the ruling party on a course of expansion, ramification, concentration and centralization of its power.

With '*Garibi Hatao*' as a slogan to beat all slogans of populist vintage, the ruling party marched back to power with a popular vote of unprecedented magnitude in the States as at the Centre, for a while driving the forces of opposition into the background even in those States in which they had first reared their head during the late '60s. A political irony was to become encased in this otherwise dazzling victory of the Congress (R) in the 1972 election with the publication of the food production statistics in the same year which revealed that Indian agriculture had at last broken the back of the problem of food deficit for the first time since Independence. The regionally-based parties—not least in the heartland States—of the rich and middle peasantry which, for the first time in 1967, had already successfully undermined the ruling party's monopoly of political power in at least six States, had emerged on the economic scene in their own right as a formidable element (with their own separate interests) of the Indian ruling classes.

India's success in production was viewed from radically different angles by the two main segments of the Indian ruling classes. The

national (industrial) bourgeoisie in general (and big capital, led by Tata and Birla, in particular) took India's achievement of self-sufficiency in food to signify that the time was ripe for the long-awaited reversal of the terms of trade between industry and agriculture in favour of the former (Mitra, 1977). In other words, industry, which had been growing until then by slow degrees (under adverse international conditions of trade reflected in the balance of payments crisis in which the government was, from one year to the next, engulfed) and had been under the direct tutelage, as it were, of the state, should now be given the opportunity to produce more as well as to develop and expand its internal and external markets by means of fresh injections of capital from the agricultural sector through taxation, a policy of lessening subsidies of various kinds, and increased procurement by the state at favourable prices.

At the same time, more value should be squeezed, so the argument went, from labour by keeping wages down (or at least by preventing them rising) and by a process of rationalization and marginalization of labour wherever possible. A section of the ruling party, led by Indira Gandhi, was sympathetic to this point of view and was in fact prepared to mobilize the machinery of state power to achieve these goals.

In the event, however, the government was far more successful in its attempts to apply the squeeze to Indian labour (as evidenced, for example, by the brutal treatment meted out to those who took part in the 1974 national railway strike which was completely crushed) than in its attempts to pressurize the rich and middle peasantry into accepting a new economic discipline that would permit a flow of surplus from agriculture to industry. With the emasculation of the traditional left (during the late '60s) and the rise of populism within the Congress, there was little internal resistance to the anti-labour orientation of the Indira Gandhi government, whilst the left forces outside the Congress(R) and in the opposition were far too weak to throw down the gauntlet on labour's behalf.

To the political tendencies in India representing the interests of the rural rich (as yet not representing a cohesive national force, but powerfully represented at the State level in a number of regions and sub-regions), India's achievement of self-sufficiency in food production signalled the attainment of political maturity by the agricultural bourgeoisie as a class (or as a class fraction of the ruling classes, with its own distinctive political identity, as the case may be) which had qualified itself to become more or less an equal partner of the industrial bourgeoisie in the exercise of state power.

Thus, the political forces representing the interests of the rich and middle peasantry, far from giving way, came into more or less overt conflict with those representing the interests of industry. They were

by no means confined to *kulak* parties such as the numerous variations—transmogrified from time to time—of the Lok Dal, which have appeared on the political scene since 1967. They were powerfully present *within* the ruling party itself for, after all, it had owed its success in the 1972 election in no small measure to the part that the rich and middle peasantry played in many (especially, but not only the heartland) States throughout India as the Congress(R)'s 'vote bank' charged with the task of delivering the rural vote.

To these political forces, the policies pursued by the Government of India during the Emergency (in particular, its scarcely concealed attempt to transfer 'Agriculture' from the 'State' to the 'Central' list in the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution) represented a *volte face* on the part of the ruling party which they were determined to resist and reverse. No wonder, then, that the Emergency (which had the enthusiastic support of India's captains of industry, who were in fact consulted before its imposition), faltered at the altar of *kulak*-based opposition in the very regions in which the ruling party had appeared to be impregnable during the first quarter of a century of independence.

A discussion such as this, of the internal *political* dynamic of the Indira Gandhi (Mark I) government in its heyday, is essential for an understanding of the logic underlying the relatively 'recessive' stance that the Indian state assumed on the international scene. During the period 1972–7, India's foreign policy role in relation to Third World countries differed substantially from its orientation during the late '50s and '60s.

At the three successive non-aligned summits that took place in Lusaka, Colombo, and Havana,¹² the leadership of the non-aligned movement moved away from its Asian centre of gravity in India in the direction of more militant member states which had played a significant role in anti-imperialist national liberation struggles in different parts of Central, Southern, and East Africa, as well as Central America. Even the token interest shown by India and the traditional respect enjoyed by it as a senior non-aligned power at the Lusaka and Colombo summits all but evaporated at the Havana summit, to which the caretaker government under Prime Minister Chowdhury Charan Singh (after the collapse in 1979 of the Janata coalition and the departure from government of Atal Behari Vajpayee) sent a politically and internationally nondescript personality as the representative of the head of the Indian government!

In contrast to its relative inactivity at a global level in the

¹² Admittedly, the Havana summit took place when the Janata administration was on its last leg.

non-aligned movement during this period, the Indian government's interest in the rest of South Asia as a potential bulwark for the extension of India's strategic and geo-political influence was marked by fresh initiatives and new thrusts. After the liberation of Bangladesh, Indira Gandhi showed a remarkable interest in consolidating India's position as a pre-eminent power in the region. Her initiatives in this direction took two main forms.

First, she engaged in bilateral approaches to Pakistan and Bangladesh—with the former with a view to 'normalizing' Indo-Pakistani relations by ensuring that the American penetration of Pakistan was kept to a minimum whilst, as far as practicable, keeping Pakistan from becoming a nuclear power; with the latter, more overtly, with a view to keeping a certain degree of Indian interest in its future alive. Second, Indira Gandhi welcomed (though cautiously and only in principle) Soviet initiatives in encouraging South Asian countries acting together as a coherent region in international relations (Rai, 1990).

To a certain extent, therefore, Indira Gandhi's overtures in the region were welcomed by the Soviet Union which, under Brezhnev and for its own reasons, encouraged the notion of a sort of mutual security alliance embracing the whole of a non-nuclear South Asian region (including itself)—an idea which (*minus* Soviet participation) was to mature in the decade of the '80s in the form of a still somewhat tentative South Asian Regional Community (SARC). India's attitude to the rest of South Asia was marked by a preoccupation with its own sense of geo-political dominance (as signified, for example, by the unceremonious manner in which Sikkim was absorbed as a part of the Indian Union in 1975), even in its most conciliatory gestures towards China.

In any case, apart from the role played within the region by India in the Bangladesh liberation struggle, its involvement in regional power politics during the early '70s was not marked by enduring, concrete results. When the Emergency was in force, India was in no position to assert itself internationally, with even its supporters abroad having to defend India against criticism from without and within.

The Janata government's approach to foreign policy and the path taken by the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government were of a piece. At the rhetorical level at least, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Janata External Affairs minister, harked back to the Nehru days by extolling the virtues of non-alignment as a discourse of international relations and foreign policy in a divided world. On a more practical level, however, the Janata government, which represented a coalition of ruling class interests at the Centre to a degree greater than ever before, sought to

resolve the capital shortage faced by industry by pursuing a policy of encouraging the flow of private foreign capital into India.

In order to achieve this end, the new government had to move closer to the West in general and the United States in particular (Sridharan, 1990). Politically and ideologically, the Janata government which, unlike its predecessors, made no claim to leftism nor had encumbered its thinking with clichés of 'shibboleth' socialism, was well placed to bring about an alteration in the inclination of India's foreign economic policy towards the West without fundamentally changing its posture of equidistance between the two power blocs of the world led by hostile superpowers. The exalted position occupied by American capitalism in the Janata Prime Minister's world-view, and the abhorrence with which he regarded communism, did not hamper the work of his adroit Foreign Minister in keeping the two sides relatively happy with India whilst introducing the slight Westward tilt that was required in India's foreign policy under the new dispensation.

The international focus of the Janata regime was divided between the major industrial powers, on the one hand, and India's neighbours, on the other; it did not extend to the Third World as a whole to any significant degree. In this sense, the Indian government's posture of quiescent non-alignment during the 1972–7 period did not change under Janata rule. In fact, during the interregnum *within* the Janata interregnum (July–December 1979), India's foreign policy, after Vajpayee's departure from government, under the caretaker Prime Minister Chowdhury Charan Singh, scarcely paid any attention to non-alignment—or, for that matter, Third World issues.

If in his approach to the rhetoric of India's non-alignment towards hostile ideologies, Vajpayee recaptured the central foreign policy thread of the Nehru era; in his approach to India's weaker neighbours he proved to be far more flexible and purposeful. His overtures to India's weaker neighbours reminded one of Lal Bahadur Shastri's solicitous egalitarianism towards them. At the same time, Vajpayee made a serious attempt to place India's relations with Pakistan and China on a new footing of mutual accommodation of conflicting interests by loosening, to a certain degree, the conventional mould in which they had become set over the decades.

The only international issue affecting the South Asian region on which the Janata government, given its policy predilections and its general orientation, would have felt compelled to exert politico-strategic counter-pressure was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan from December 1978 onwards. But, by then, the government had already lost much of its vitality and was far too preoccupied with internal problems to worry about questions of an international nature in general and those affecting the fate of Third World countries in particular.

The Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government was quick to take advantage of the new avenues of foreign policy that had been opened up under the Janata administration which, given Indira Gandhi's role in her Mark I administration, she would have been hard put to initiate. In particular, it entered into a far-reaching agreement with the IMF under the terms of which India secured Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to the tune of well over five billion US dollars. An initiative, on Indira Gandhi's part, so pregnant with political significance for the developing class character of the Indian state, leading to the entrenchment of large amounts of foreign capital in the Indian economy, would have been resisted to a far greater degree than was actually the case had the climate for it not been prepared by the Janata government.

This is not the appropriate place to consider the difficulties faced by Indira Gandhi during her second Prime Ministerial stint except to point out that the problems which were thrown to the surface in the aftermath of her post-1971 attempts to consolidate the power of the Indian state (not least among them being the recrudescence, in a much more serious form than before, of the hostile relations between the Centre and the States) once again appeared with redoubled vigour (Sathyamurthy, 1989). Suffice it to note that during Indira Gandhi's last five years in power she never really succeeded in her efforts to re-establish her control over the government.

Her second coming on the stage of Indian politics was therefore marked by a further dilution of the ruling party's devotion to the politics of 'shibboleth' socialism, and a growing conviction that the breach created by the strident *kulak* opposition to a programme of net transfer of resources from agriculture to industry could only be met by ensuring conditions favourable to the penetration of the Indian economy (desirably under the control and supervision of the Government of India serving the interests of different segments of Indian capital) by foreign capital.¹⁵ At the same time, the Indira Gandhi

¹⁵ It is true that the relations between India and the United States have been somewhat overwrought from time to time, and differences erupt on matters relating to South Asia (such as, for example, India's objection to US military assistance to Pakistan, and American objection to India's refusal to condemn the Soviet Union outright over the Afghanistan issue), as well as the Third World in general (most recently, on the question of sanctions against South Africa). But, since the United States became convinced (as it has been for several years now) that India was in fact following a non-socialist path of economic development and the Indian economy would be more and more hospitable to the penetration into it of foreign (multi-/inter-/transnational) capital, political irritation between the two countries is no longer of much account. This has been particularly true of Indo-US relations during the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and since. At the same time, India has shown no inclination to distance itself from the Soviet Union. For a penetrating and original study of Indo-Soviet relations, (see Rai, 1990).

(Mark II) government availed itself of the opportunity presented by the Janata government's fresh initiative towards Pakistan and China without completely giving up its taste for inflexibility induced by memories of past behaviour. Changed international circumstances, however, dictated caution and circumspection because structures such as the institutions of trade and economic cooperation to be forged under the aegis of the South Asian Association of Regional cooperation (SAARC) would require, for their effective functioning, a modicum of goodwill and eschewal by members of chauvinist behaviour in international relations.

Only in its response towards the Soviet Union did the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government make a decisive return to the old intimacy that had prevailed between the two governments during the 1972–7 period. Here, of course, Indira Gandhi was anxious to distance her government from the Janata government's somewhat sceptical approach to Soviet superpower and its strategic interest in obtaining for itself a stranglehold on the Indian Ocean base.

In marked contrast to the Indira Gandhi (Mark I) government's low key approach during the early and mid-'70s to non-alignment, the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) government embarked on a policy clearly designed to give India's role as the leader of the non-aligned powers a face-lift. Returning to power as she did within a few months of the Indian discomposure at the non-aligned summit in Havana (Sathyamurthy, 1983a, 1983b), Indira Gandhi sought to repair the damage by following a policy of reasserting India's commitment to non-alignment and identification with other Third World countries, even though as a term of political discourse, non-alignment (at least in the Indian context) had long since been drained of its original meaning.

Within three years of assuming power, the government converted Delhi into a 'conference capital' by making it successively the venue of the Asian Games (1982) and the Non-Aligned Powers' summit (1983). Unfortunately, however, the international legitimacy accruing from its reassumption of the political leadership of the non-aligned world—which did receive widespread international endorsement, including the approval of far more radical powers than India such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and socialist African states—did little to help Indira Gandhi establish the hegemony of her government in domestic politics.

The rejection of her authority by different segments of the Indian political system in such crucially important areas of India as the southern States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the north-eastern State of Assam, in the Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir in the north-west created problems for Indira Gandhi which she found increasingly

difficult to handle.¹¹ No amount of window-dressing could ameliorate the enormous range of tensions and contradictions which had surfaced as a result of the efforts of the Indian state under Indira Gandhi's leadership to centralize power and restrict democracy.

Thus, the resurgence of Indira Gandhi's interest in non-alignment and the interest that she showed during the 1980-1 period in fashioning a leading role for India in the Third World did not produce concrete results of any great significance. However, as in undertaking the task of building bridges of cooperation and friendship with other South Asian countries through the instrument of SARC, where the Janata government had opened a new chapter in political relations with neighbouring countries, Indira Gandhi was able to continue work already begun.

In sum, India under the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) administration did reach the limelight for a brief while on the international stage of the non-aligned world. But, internationally, India's position (and it is worth remembering that India is not only the largest but also the most developed and the most important Third World country outside the 'socialist' world) was somewhat ambivalent, in sharp contrast to the clearly leading role that it had played during the '50s and '60s; its abandonment of even the 'shibboleth' socialism of the '50s in favour of an increasingly strident espousal of capitalist economic policies (Bartu, 1983, 1990; Sridharan, 1990) and the international approaches that were thus necessitated, simply had the effect of knocking the ideological stuffing out of its protestations of adherence to a non-aligned stance in world affairs. By the same token, the steady erosion which Indira Gandhi's authority in the domestic sphere suffered dimmed the afterglow of the great international gathering of 1983 at which the mantle of leadership of the non-aligned movement was formally transferred from Havana to Delhi.

Current phase: aftermath of non-alignment?

Viewed against a backcloth of psychological, economic, and political shifts that have been under way in India during the last quarter of a century, events following Indira Gandhi's assassination and the

¹¹ In fact, a situation objectively similar to that emerging to the east of India (Bangladesh, 1971) during Indira Gandhi's Mark I administration did present itself in July 1983 in the form of the suppression of the Tamils by the government of Sri Lanka. Indira Gandhi was no doubt tempted to intervene on more than one occasion, but her position *within* India which had become far more embattled in 1983 than it had been in 1971, prevented her from engaging in military intervention in Sri Lanka on the side of the Tamils.

emergence of a new leadership within the Congress (I) take on a significance far greater than that of one elected regime stepping into the shoes of another. At least three aspects of the changing political configuration of India are worth noting in this connection.

First, the leadership of the Congress(I) party has for the first time passed into the hands of the post-independence generation (with the assumption of power by Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1984). This may indeed have far-reaching consequences. Nehru, Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, and Chowdhury Charan Singh—though of radically different intellectual and political orientations—shared a common ideology of Indian nationalism which was forged on the anvil of India's struggle for independence from colonial rule. As such, they responded to demands made by regional political forces for greater autonomy of State governments (led by themselves) in relation to the Centre negatively, invariably regarding regional movements (such as, for example, the Shiromani Akali Dal or the Asom Gana Parishad or for that matter even Telugu Desam) as centrifugal and anti-national in character, and therefore prone to dealing with them harshly.

The new Congress(I) leadership under Rajiv Gandhi, however, was characterized (until the fall from power of his government in the 1989 election) by a different psychological orientation which permitted the Centre (during the period 1984–9) to deal with grievances emanating from the States flexibly, as stemming from conflicts of interest between different segments of the 'ruling elites' (as they are wont to think, but really different segments of the 'ruling classes' as we are inclined to think) which can be ameliorated through deals struck between the Centre and the States concerned. Most sources of conflict of interest have price tags attached to them, in so far as was practicable, the Centre under the Rajiv Gandhi government was predisposed to paying the price and in effect purchasing amity.

Under Rajiv Gandhi, the aim of the central government was to use the inordinate power of the Indian state to permit a certain degree of relative autonomy for the constituent States rather than to keep discontent and grievances emanating from these sources firmly lidded down. The qualitatively different approach of the Rajiv Gandhi government (by comparison with that of all its Congress-led predecessors) to the forces of parliamentary opposition in the States was successful in the case of Assam (where an Asom Gana Parishad government was returned to power in 1986) but abandoned in the case of the Punjab half-way through the parliamentary career of the Shiromani Akali Dal government under the Chief Ministership of Surjit Singh Barnala elected to office in 1985 (and arbitrarily dismissed by the Centre in 1987). In effect, however, the economic

demands of the various States ruled by opposition parties were not met, primarily because the Centre did not have the capacity to generate the resources needed to meet the rising economic expectations of the leading regional bourgeois and productive as well as non-productive petit bourgeois forces in the various States, or, for that matter, to enable the national (industrial) bourgeoisie to develop capitalist manufacture and a national market to the fullest possible extent.

Second, the economic contradictions between the different segments of the ruling classes have, over the last two decades, been thrown into bold relief. On the national level, the class character of the Indian state has developed in such a manner as to compel the national industrial capitalist bourgeoisie and the rural bourgeoisie (led by the rich peasantry) to recognize the fact that neither side can be realistically expected to sacrifice its interests for the other in its attempts to maintain dynamic economic growth. Even though the rural bourgeoisie are yet to develop a fully cohesive national identity, they have come a long way from their bucolic past and now constitute a force of considerable magnitude and importance not only in the opposition in the Lok Sabha until recently (and, for over a year, on the Treasury benches since December 1989) but also on the opposition and Treasury benches of an increasing number of Vidhan Sabhas. Moreover, they have emerged as a common denominator in all the national parties (with the exception of the cadre parties, viz. the communist parties and the BJP).

At the same time, it should be noted that struggles waged in various States for greater autonomy extend well beyond the clamour of rich and middle peasantry for a greater share of resources for the development of agriculture. Thus, another area of conflict lies in the keen competition between the Centre, on the one hand, and on the other, medium- and small-scale industrialists located in the various regions whose demands, beyond a certain point, can only be met at the expense of other segments of the ruling classes. In addition to these tensions and contradictions, conflict between the competing claims of foreign capital and national capital is bound to intensify as the policy of recent governments (including the National Front government, the minority government that succeeded it, and the elected minority government of the Congress (I), currently in power) of encouraging the penetration of multinational and transnational capital into the Indian economy, begins to take firm root.

I have not referred to the oppressed classes—subject as they have been to an unprecedented degree of intensive and far-reaching differentiation, polarization, marginalization, and immiserization in urban as well as rural India—in this discussion, because the organized

parties and movements of the working classes are weak, fragmented and unevenly developed and have, by and large, failed to take up the challenge of the ruling classes in a revolutionary spirit. Their day will no doubt come, perhaps sooner than can now be anticipated. But, until then, the processes of flux and change in the Indian economy will continue to centre round the political victories and defeats resulting from the tensions and contradictions engulfing the relations between the different segments of the ruling classes at the Centre and in the States. At the present juncture, however, the intra-ruling class contradiction and the contradiction between the ruling class and the mass of the people (including the working classes) are sufficiently interlinked (as differentiated from one of them arching over and subsuming the other). Pressure from the different segments of the working class in rural and urban India is one of the factors that contributes to a heightening of the tension between the industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie.

Third, while it is true that Indira Gandhi was the first to embark upon the dangerous course of splitting the Congress party (first in 1969, and subsequently in 1978), class relations in India during the last twenty years or so have developed in such a manner as to render the fragmentation of all major political forces inescapable. It is essential for students of India's political economy to grasp that the constraints and limitations that developing a modern capitalist system (*à la* the advanced industrial economies of the world) imposes on a large underdeveloped and dependent economy with a vast agricultural base are such as to undermine the *raison d'être* of multi-class umbrella political party organizations such as the Congress party in the medium if not the short run. This is indeed what has happened, even though the precise form assumed by the ruptures within the Congress party would in all probability have been substantially, though not fundamentally different, had a less forceful hand than Indira Gandhi's brought them about.

With the exception of a few cadre parties on the left—CPI and CPI(M)—and on the right—BJP—fragmentation has always been endemic to all political parties on the Indian national and regional scene. But, because of its past history, and by virtue of its long career as the ruling party of the country, the Congress party (Congress(R), since 1969; and Congress(I), since 1979) has always been able to rally support from its different potentially contradictory elements in times of crisis. But, even with the patchwork unity that it has proved capable of achieving from time to time (as, for example, in the immediate aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination leading up to the 1984 general election), it has not been able to prevent the consolidation of power in a number of States around opposition forces and their political parties.

Thus, whilst it is true that the Congress(I), with all its internal cracks

hastily papered over, has until recently enjoyed a monopoly of power at the Centre, it was displaced from power even during Rajiv Gandhi's term in office, in State after State by national as well as regional opposition parties which, since the '60s and '70s, appear to have lost some of their endemic incohesiveness. Moreover, in such agriculturally important States as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, and to a lesser degree Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Rajasthan, rich and middle peasant supporters of the Congress(I) can transfer their political support to the Lok Dal. This tendency on the part of the agriculturally well off segments (Sathyamurthy, 1985) of the population would explain the reverses suffered by the Congress(I) in a number of State Assembly elections prior to and since 1989, as well as in the Lok Sabha elections of 1989, especially in the north. It would be correct to say that whilst the tendency to counter fragmentation among parties other than the Congress(I) should not be exaggerated, the potential of the Congress(I) for internal fragmentation at the all-India as well as the regional levels should not be underestimated.

Rajiv Gandhi fully committed the central government to a policy of 'piloting' the country into the twenty-first century through a strategy of rapid industrialization, technological development, and widespread modernization of agricultural production where possible. This was indeed a signal for opening the floodgates for foreign investment in India which would necessarily entail a closer alignment of India's future with the future of the capitalist world in general and the West in particular. It could indeed be said that, even though the main political tendency within the Congress(I) under Rajiv Gandhi's leadership was less overtly pro-Western in ideological terms (and, by the same token, more unsceptical of the Soviet Union) than that within the Janata coalition of the late '70s, the central government under Rajiv Gandhi was far more clearly committed to the development of capitalism in India than the Janata administration. In this sense, there is a clearer thread of continuity between the overall economic strategies of the Rajiv Gandhi administration and its successors than those of the Janata and the Indira Gandhi (Mark II) administrations.

So far as the post-Indira Gandhi phase of the Congress(I) is concerned, there seemed to be no contradiction in the thinking of its leadership between, on the one hand, continuing to maintain close friendly relations with the Soviet Union (and also to offer the Indian subcontinent as a strategic area on its southern flank from a global perspective) and, on the other, taking the necessary steps to attract Western foreign aid and capital investment into India on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

Under these circumstances, devotion to the non-aligned cause was

relegated to a secondary place (e.g. Harikumar, 1988) even as an earlier commitment to 'the socialist pattern of society' was allowed to go into eclipse with the coming to power of the Congress(I) government in 1984 under Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister. Chairing non-aligned meetings during the remainder of the interval between the New Delhi session (1983) and the Harare summit (1987), or organizing anti-nuclear meetings between the leaders of five selected non-aligned powers (New Delhi, 1985 was the first such), or giving expression to earnest differences of opinion with Margaret Thatcher over the issue of economic sanctions against South Africa (Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting, Barbados, 1985), were no more than pleasant diversions from the serious task of building capitalism in India and adjusting the tensions and contradictions in which the different segments of the ruling classes were bound to become embroiled in the process.

The Rajiv Gandhi government did consciously seek to maintain strong threads of continuity with the two previous governments in the sphere of South Asian regional cooperation, in the interest shown in the future of Pakistan in the light of America's heavy military involvement in the region, in the watchful eye cast on the Bangladesh border with a view to soothing the misgivings of the north-eastern States, and the role that it played in the composition of the ethnic strife that had assumed serious proportions in Sri Lanka since July 1983.¹³

In relation to SAARC, the flexibility of Rajiv Gandhi's general approach and his practical bent of mind (tinged with scarcely concealed impatience with ideological questions) resulted in the focus shifting (SARC meetings, e.g. Dhaka, Bangalore, and Islamabad: December 1985, December 1986, and April 1988, respectively) from declarations reiterating the common purpose of the various partners in the region to building concrete institutional structures which, by gradual stages, could be turned to the task of achieving practical ends.

The route to the achievement of a common understanding on the part of individual South Asian countries of the security problems facing them in the long run was a gleam in Brezhnev's eye even during the '70s. Whilst India was keen to pursue the idea further, it

¹³ Rajiv Gandhi, however, sought to improve the diplomatic style brought to bear on India's relations with its neighbours, especially Sri Lanka. Thus, G. Parthasarathy, the last of the old school 'fuddy duddies', was gently but firmly eased out of the scene soon after Rajiv Gandhi took power. In the place of the slow moving waltz of old-fashioned 'Vienna' style diplomacy, a new and vigorous South Asian version of 'shuttle' diplomacy, appropriately emulating the more swiftly paced example of Washington DC, was instituted.

was anxious to avoid direct participation by the Soviet Union in any collective identities that might be forged by the countries of the region towards such ends. The ease with which India has been able to enter the scene on its own terms during the '80s signifies not only a slackening of interest on the Soviet Union's part in too deep an entanglement, on a day to day basis, in the affairs of South Asia (especially in the wake of its Afghanistan policy and its preoccupation with domestic and East European developments), but also, even more remarkably, the extent to which the political economies of the region as a whole (including India) have become alien to any 'pattern of socialist development' and in that sense become blended together into a more or less homogeneous system.

The rejection of socialism—shibboleths and all—on the part of the Indian government has won the trust and approval of the United States, which no longer objects to India's playing 'chief' (on terms that would no doubt be superintended by the United States) to the 'Indians' in the form of the small states surrounding it. This new orientation of the world's major imperialist power with special reference to South Asia, coming in the wake of the Soviet Union's retreat from competitive high profile involvement in international affairs, at least for the time being, has given an edge to Indian domination of the region besides providing additional political space in which domestic disputes involving sensitive border States such as Jammu and Kashmir and the Punjab can be tackled. The Rajiv Gandhi government as well as its successors led by the National Front coalition, the Janata Dal (Samajwadi) Party and the elected Congress(I) minority administration, respectively, have been seized with new facets of these problems since mid-1989.

The expanded role played by India in the regional politics of South Asia is thus a direct political result of the ties of economic dependence forged between Indian capital and foreign capital, and the ensuing dependence of the Indian state on imperialist and metropolitan states. In this development, the status of non-alignment as a concept or even a slogan has become so downgraded that it no longer carries any concrete significance as a term of political discourse in India.

Typical of the 'new look' regional posture of the post-nonalignment era is the involvement of India in the Tamil question facing the Sri Lanka state since 1983. Here again the Indian government was motivated by contradictory aims. To the extent that the spill-over into Tamil Nadu of the demands of the Tamils in Sri Lanka was useful in forging links between the Congress(I) (utterly and permanently discredited in Tamil Nadu politics) and AIADMK, the then ruling party in the State, the Rajiv Gandhi government was ready to stoke the fires of Tamil Eelam separatism. Yet, as in Bangladesh (1971), so

too in the case of Sri Lanka (during the '80s), the Indian government was deeply suspicious of the impact that the *genuinely* separatist (i.e. the 100 per cent separatist) forces (as distinct from political forces interested only in the limited goal of power-sharing) might, in the long run, exercise on the people of Tamil Nadu. At the same time, India was also interested in controlling the problem by using its regional dominance in its state-to-state relations with Sri Lanka.

In all the politicking that went on behind the scenes in Delhi, Madras, Colombo, Thimpu, and elsewhere, no great national or security interest of India was at stake even though the Rajiv Gandhi government derived satisfaction from Sri Lanka's readiness to regard India's dominance in the region as legitimate. The logical corollary of this perception on Sri Lanka's part was its subsequent decision (July 1987), in the wake of the threat posed by JVP among the Sinhala population, to invite the Indian armed forces (IPKF) to take up positions in the northern and eastern areas of Sri Lanka with a view to assisting in the resolution of the Tamil question, pending the grant of some kind of local autonomy to the Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils within a framework of a constitutionally guaranteed devolution of power. Once the Indian armed forces entered the scene, it became clear to the Tamils that their role was no less anti-people and oppressive than that of the Sri Lankan armed forces. Their credibility was rapidly eroded not only in the eyes of the Tamil (and Sinhala) people but also in the eyes of the Sri Lankan government which saw them as yet another obstacle to the task of restoring some kind of equilibrium.

The timing and the domestic political juncture surrounding the introduction of the IPKF in Sri Lanka were all wrong. As far as the Rajiv Gandhi government was concerned, the disenchantment of the Indian people with its Sri Lanka policy was mutely registered in the form of crosses on the ballot papers of certain segments of the electorate in the Tamil Nadu State Assembly and Lok Sabha elections of 1989. The incoming National Front government, anxious to erase the impression of India as a trigger-happy, jackbooted regional Big Power and to restore India to its 'Janata' self-image of a coequal power in the region, took the the earliest opportunity to create diplomatic conditions under which the IPKF could be brought back home with the utmost rapidity. This did indeed happen. The complex political interactions of the region leading up to the penetration of Indian armed forces in neighbouring Sri Lanka, behind which the forces of imperialism ranged themselves, pointed to the limits—objective and subjective—within which India's exercise of regional hegemony could be effective and the very thin line dividing the factors conducive to it from those that would inhibit it.

It is appropriate to draw attention to the close interconnection between India's 'security' aims in South Asia and its long-term economic aims. We have noted elsewhere in this chapter that the first great spurt of economic activity on the part of the Indian national bourgeoisie was engendered in the expansion of the domestic market, for which the scope at Independence was, and still is today, immense. However, a tendency inherent in the structure of Indian capital,¹⁶ and in the prolonged economic crisis facing the state¹⁷ caused by international factors (over which it has no control) as well as internal factors, has been its inability to exploit the opportunities provided by the Indian market. More recent links between Indian and multinational/transnational capital have resulted in a keener interest on the part of certain segments of the Indian national bourgeoisie to turn South Asia into its own market, albeit in subsidiary collaboration with multinational corporations with the controlling partners of Indian joint enterprises making the appropriate decisions. India's attempt to establish regional hegemony in the political sphere, anchored in its concept of 'security', is clearly linked to its developing economic role in the marketplace of South Asia (DN, 1988, 1988a).

The principal argument of this chapter rests on the symbiotic relationship between the role of the Indian state in orchestrating the increasingly contradictory economic interests of a clearly differentiated¹⁸ and vastly ramified though unequally developed Indian bourgeoisie, and its political reflection in international relations. During the '50s, India entered the international scene believing that the world was its oyster, as a power keen to take part in issues of a global import as a 'third force', keeping clear of military involvements and ideological entanglements. Over the decades, however, changes in the climate of power in international relations and alterations in the fortunes of the Indian national bourgeoisie have contributed to a shift in focus for the Indian state from role-playing on the global scene to

¹⁶ I.e. its uneven development, its inability to fuel industrial and agricultural growth at a simultaneously accelerated pace, its increasing dependence on foreign technology and multinational/transnational capital.

¹⁷ The state has sought to cope with the crisis by a shift of gear from a greater involvement in planned production and distribution to a more *laissez faire* policy orientation.

¹⁸ Even the agricultural bourgeoisie of northern India is rent by political splits between those belonging to the old order (represented at the present moment by Devi Lal and his family) and those (such as Ajit Singh, and to a less clear extent the representatives of these interests in the present government of Bihar and the two successive governments of Uttar Pradesh, elected to power since 1990) who subscribe to a closer linkage between industry and agriculture. Classes in India are in a state of constant formation and re-formation which tends to invest intra-class antagonisms with a degree of aggressiveness not frequently encountered in societies in transition. This is taken up in Volume 4 of this series.

an exercise of the hegemonic role for which it has secured the approval of both the superpowers.

Future trends

India's dominance in South Asia has as its cornerstone an alignment between its concept of 'domestic' or 'internal' security (which has, as one of its cardinal components, implacable opposition to popular movements that seek in any fundamental way to alter the class base of political power of the post-colonial state) and of 'regional' security in line with the concept of 'global' security acceptable to the imperialist powers (under the leadership of the United States) as well as to the Soviet Union, their erstwhile superpower antagonist. In other words, India has, over the last four decades, shed its craving for 'autonomy' in international relations while qualifying itself as a suitable regional *gendarme* to which the long-term global interests of the Big Powers in the area and the economic interests of the international bourgeoisie can be safely entrusted.

This does not, however, mean that different governments in control of state power in India perform their hegemonic task with equal relish or bring to it the same ardour or measure of authoritarianism and arrogance. Thus, to take only one example, the abrupt and insulting manner in which the Rajiv Gandhi government dealt with Nepal (1988–9) when the latter's security policy clashed with the former's idea of what it should be, both in the narrow national and in the broader regional context (DN, 1988b), gave way, after the coming to power of the National Front government (and also in the wake of changes in the domestic political arrangements in Nepal itself), to a much more accommodating policy rooted in respect for small neighbours. An illustration not of conceptual differences on the question of 'security' between the two governments, but rather one of different ways in which a small neighbour can be treated without sacrificing the interests of hegemonic rule.¹⁹ In short, the difference between the two successive Indian governments was similar to differences in behaviour between two general practitioners, one a boor, the other with an impeccable bedside manner! It is worth noting that whilst the government led by the Janata Dal (Samajwadi) *groupuscule* in the Lok Sabha followed a policy broadly similar to that of its predecessor, the Congress (I) government that has taken power after the 1991 general

¹⁹ At the same time, it is worth noting that in meeting the demands of significant sections of the population, such as the Muslim minority in Kashmir, neither the National Front administration nor its successors have departed from the sledgehammer approach of their Congress(I) predecessor.

election has not reverted to the policy orientation and, in particular, the style of functioning of the Rajiv Gandhi administration.

Since the dawn of the era of perestroika and glasnost (from 1986 onwards), the first major contradiction of the post-war world has evaporated (except in remote outposts such as Vietnam and Cuba), though the residue left in the form of potential clashes of interest rooted in *realpolitik sans ideologie* will invest it with a fresh charge in decades to come. Even before the advent of perestroika, the third major contradiction of the post-war world had subsided from its original belligerent antagonistic contradictory state (1968–82) into a non-antagonistic one. The only major contradiction that has continued unabated—though in different forms and under different guises ranging from apparently evanescent and spontaneous demonstrations of the ‘People’s Power’ variety to persistent political manifestations of anti-imperialism (as, for example, in a number of different areas of the Middle East) throughout the post-war era—is that between the forces of national liberation and the forces of imperialism. The latest twist in Soviet (and Russia’s) policy towards Third World countries of actually recommending capitalist development as the ‘way forward’ may well contribute to an intensification of the major contradiction between the forces of national liberation and imperialism in decades to come. There is no sign that its antagonistic character will change in the foreseeable future even with the socialist camp of yesterday turned into an introspective political force of today and tomorrow.

India’s interest in this global context of changing configurations of power lies in the formidable potential of mass-based movements to change the face of Indian politics and economy. At the same time, the Indian state, despite its partial and truncated experience of establishing bourgeois–democratic and pluralist political norms is, on balance, the trustee of the interests of the different segments of the Indian national and regional bourgeois classes rather than the upholder of the economic interests and the democratic rights of workers and peasants, minorities, and socially oppressed segments of the population; in short, the mass of the Indian people. Its role in international relations has evolved in relation to the profound breach between the interests of the Indian ruling classes and the interests of the mass of the Indian people.

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Democratic Political Structures • 5

SATISH SABERWAL

1. Preliminaries

Very generally, we may see Indian society as a segmented, cellular social space being restructured, over the past century or two, for mega-societal social space. We notice here a vast enlargement of social space; that is, a manifold expansion of the scale of possible social activities, made feasible by such technology as the railways and satellite communications, and by such institutions as the general election and the stock exchange. This mega-societal space is sub-continental in scale, and recent decades have added a substantial *international* dimension with several components: not only the general *global village* aspect with its multinationals, mass media and air travel, and pools of symbols and technologies, but also, for India, the considerable international emigration and its social (including political) fall-out.

In appraising the political processes in India since 1947, it is necessary to remember that it was impossible, then, to pick up where the eighteenth century had left off. Between the time that the indigenous élites lost control over their own societies, and the moment of independence, the informational, technological, political, and other

changes had been such as to preclude a return to the pre-colonial political arrangement, at least deliberately.

At Independence, the ex-colonial societies found themselves in a global society, in a world order now made familiar by Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others; and a global public forced its attentions upon them, often at the wrong moments and for the wrong reasons. To tap their own resources of minerals and of manpower and furthermore, to translate these into such elementary needs as food, housing, health care, and collective identities, for armaments (offensive and defensive), and indeed surprisingly insightful accounts not only of other societies but also their own, the leaders of ex-colonial societies, including India, found attractive the resources of ideas, institutions, and technologies, not to mention the capital of the West. The Soviet bloc was an alternative of a kind; but *culturally* and *ideologically*, its roots too lay largely in the West.

In this chapter we begin with a reference to the historical context in which, following modest colonial beginnings, democratic political structures (specified in the Appendix) were established in India after 1947. The crowded agenda that faced the Indian polity at the time of Independence included major economic and social tasks (*see* Section 2). The political structures launched by the Constitution of 1950 relied heavily on Western institutional styles which stood in sharp contrast to the political styles which had prevailed in India historically. Section 3 seeks to identify some of the dimensions of this contrast.

Section 4 examines the processes of political mobilization in India around interests and symbols. The scholarly perception of the underlying dynamics underwent a change of paradigm during the '70s (section 5). The earlier one had been optimistic, stressing the amenability of 'traditional' institutions for contemporary, modern purposes. Subsequently, there has been greater willingness to recognize a wide-ranging de-institutionalization: of the earlier indigenous structures such as the caste order and of colonial institutions like the bureaucracy, as well as of the ethic of public service associated with the freedom struggle. In Section 6, we appraise these processes overall with reference to the sociological categories of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

The canvas is necessarily complex; yet the analytic framework should help in reducing that complexity to a measure of orderliness.

2. India's political problem, 1947

The colonial state

The colonial state was created by the British in the course of

establishing their rule over a vast land and alien peoples. We have space only to consider it briefly. They did not work on a clean slate.¹ Their spectacular success was due, rather, to their skill at drawing older elements into their own design. While it recognized the uses of older Indian political symbolism, and drew on it selectively,² its strength lay in its bureaucracy, backed by force, and it was oriented towards maintaining peace, part of colonial control—and all that goes with it. Guha (1989, 233–64) has tracked down the large measure of convergence between the British colonial reliance on coercion, as against persuasion, on one hand, and, on the other, the idioms and attitudes that marked the relations of dominance and subordination within the Indian tradition.

The colonial regime introduced participative political institutions slowly and reluctantly; and at least one late nineteenth century attempt ran into rough weather. In the management of South Indian temples, the king or his representative had often had to intervene in resolving conflicts within the temple. The then colonial government in Madras was reluctant to undertake that role; yet it could not abdicate the responsibility for resolving conflicts. Several alternatives were tried; and, in 1889, the Madras High Court promulgated an elective mechanism for a temple in Madras city. The procedure, it was hoped, would lead to the election of trustees who would manage the temple authoritatively; but there were endemic troubles over elections—which repeatedly required the adjudication of local colonial courts (Appadurai, 1981: 187–198).

That some of the electoral processes should have had difficulties initially is not surprising; their premises were often orthogonal with those underlying the Indian social order (*see* Section 3). The colonial regime, furthermore, could not possibly have pressed the elective principle vigorously except as part of a plan for final withdrawal from India. In the event, 'Only 28.5 per cent of the adult population of the provinces could vote in the provincial assembly elections of early 1946' (in 1937 the figure had been 15 per cent (Austin, 1966: 144)).

The colonial state recognized an obligation to adjudicate cases of conflicts, and colonial courts were operational by the late eighteenth century. General codes of a European cast, which tended to ignore group affiliations and differences of status, had to be limited in India by codes specific to the various social segments. Even the preparation of written codes specific to different segments, however, interfered with the fluidity that had marked the unwritten customary law earlier

¹ The range of political institutions in mediaeval India is reviewed in Saberwal (1986, 37–57).

² Cohn has explored the gamut of symbolism *vis-a-vis* the British in India. Illustratively, Cohn (1987, 632–82).

(Cohn, 1987: 575–631, was an early survey in 1965: Appadurai, 1981, 166–9, has reviewed the literature apropos his temple study).

Contemporary view

India's political problem, in 1947, was obvious enough at one level. It had to outgrow the colonial legacy. A form of political legitimacy, drawn not from the colonial power, but from indigenous sources, was needed; and it was not difficult to choose the western democratic forms: few respectable alternatives were on offer. The political map needed simplification: integration of the princely States was on the immediate agenda, and restructuring the States along linguistic lines followed in the '50s. The aftermath of Partition included the need to cope with communal riots and to rehabilitate the refugees. Poverty, and a sense of the imperative to catch up with the industrialized world, were important in setting the economic agenda: planning; industrialization; to breach into the rural insulation; to raise the literacy levels. Grave, salient social issues of the time included the practice of untouchability within the country; and Jawaharlal Nehru was a Prime Minister out to win an international presence for himself and his country (Sathyamurthy, 1991).

A change of phase

Let us define 'democratic political structures' as consisting of a Constitution, a differentiated party structure, and periodic acts of choice as between parties by an electorate for election to legislatures (see Appendix). Their satisfactory operation necessarily needs support from substantial, extensively learned matching skills, values, ideas, motivations, and practices. That is to say, the formal structures and processes can follow from relatively simple legislative and bureaucratic acts, while their functioning on the ground asks for a great deal more from the participants. Post-colonial India has seen a sharp expansion of these structures and processes of democracy: a move towards universal adult franchise in numerous arenas; elective arenas at national and State levels, and trials at other levels from village and town to district; and their extension into the conduct of cooperatives and other voluntary associations. However, one cannot always claim that these have been instant or long-term successes. We may note here that the structures and the processes have indeed been instituted in India with some alacrity; but there has been only limited awareness of, and less enthusiasm for, the need to carry to the common man and woman the skills, values, ideas, and motivations necessary to operate them satisfactorily.

The sharp expansion of such structures in post-colonial India has to be seen as one element within a larger change of system. In so far as, at Independence, India lay at the juncture of two sets of very different traditions, the Indian and the European, the systemic change spelt a radical change in the terms of the traditions. We may dwell upon the implications of this dual process: namely, the increased reliance on institutions of western design at a time when the European tradition *per se* has been losing ground to the politically and socially resurgent Indian traditions. That is to say, essentially imported forms have been proliferating, but the meanings which are crucial for the vitality of the forms have not been available consistently.¹

Indian society and the Constitution

Two levels of institutionalization: there is a variable relationship between a society's norms and traditions, on the one hand and, on the other, the formal Constitution which may be given to it. The point may be made as follows: norms may be said to be *institutionalized* when these have the support of sanctions; when these norms are lifted and their enforcement entrusted to specialized institutions—courts, bureaucracy, etc.—these may be said to be *re-institutionalized* (these terms derive from Bohannan, 1965: 34ff.). The 1789 Constitution in the United States would be a case of re-institutionalization, its underlying norms reflecting relatively closely the norms prevailing among the (white) society around. The 1950 Constitution in India is a horse of a different colour: between the norms underlying it and the norms prevailing among the 'mass' of the population, the gap was vast—comparable rather with the gap which had prevailed between the 1789 Constitution in the United States and the norms among the American Indians at the time, even though resonances between the norms underlying the Indian Constitution and those in the Indian tradition(s) have been suggested.

We may posit that the indigenous norms and traditions have prevailed in the rural localities and at the centres associated with the princely States and with the several religious traditions—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and others (e.g. the seats of the Sankaracharyas

¹ Much scholarship has found these two traditions as contrasting with each other along several axes. The bulk of this scholarship has been Western: Marx, Weber, Barrington Moore, Dumont are familiar names; though Hsu (1963) may be taken as an Asian entry. Conceptually, the contrast lies deep in the sociological tradition, finding comprehensive, late formulation in Talcott Parsons' *pattern variables*.

Since this scholarship is almost wholly Western, it has drawn the currently fashionable and, for some of us in India, comforting charge of Orientalism. Issues can be joined on scholarly grounds proper, however, only when adequate non-Western scholarship in this comparative mode is realized

(Cenkner, 1983); the Islamic seminary at Deoband (Metcalf, 1982). Many of the categories and concerns which pervaded Indian society, and indeed have gone into constituting it historically, appeared to be anachronistic to those who counted most in the framing of the Constitution. No wonder, then, that the Constitution should have largely ignored these categories and concerns. Indeed, there is a high level of intrinsic tension between these traditions and the Constitution. One gains the impression that its authors saw Indian society largely as passive material, awaiting re-formation under the transforming influence of the Constitution (Austin (1966) is a comprehensive study of the making of the Indian Constitution). Yet the indigenous categories and concerns continued to pervade thought and practice in the larger society, coming to the surface in political arenas at different times in various transformations.

While one must concede that the Constitution of India has indeed had considerable constitutive effects on Indian society, it is necessary to acknowledge that the contemporary incarnation of the Indian state is historically shallow. That is to say, if you consider the relations between a minister and his 'permanent' secretary, the parliament and the judiciary, the executive and the opposition, and so forth, the paradigms for these relationships do not derive from, and do not much resonate with, materials from within the Indian tradition. 'Some of the forms used at the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953', writes Nelson (1986, 283) 'go back at least a thousand years'; such deep layering cannot reasonably be sought for political forms in contemporary India. This has consequences.

A major aspect of what has been happening in Indian political arenas is the interaction between elements from the Constitution and from the indigenous traditions and social structures. Impulses and purposes of variable intensity, arising out of ingrained meanings and motivations, work themselves out in frameworks arising out of the Constitution. Let us consider the consequences of the tension between their disparate premises.

3. A juncture of traditions

In appraising the fortunes of western-style political institutions in India, we can focus on some specific kinds of difference between the two sets of traditions: differences which bear on the institutions' rise and performance in India. Garg and Parikh (teachers at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad) give us one view of the issues (1988, 128ff.):

[Members of the Indian élite], during the early period of their socialization ... tend to internalize maps of reality grounded in the Indian ethos ... These maps of reality have an emotive content and hold the primary meanings, commitments, quality of relatedness and the direction of cathecting energy acquired during childhood socialization. These emotive maps are not compatible with the growth and development oriented cognitive maps acquired from the western ethos. Thus, the élite have a fragmented identity of conflicting values and behavioural orientations, with the emotive identity straining after Indian values, kinship bonds, affiliation orientation, and hierarchical relationships ..., and the cognitive rationality after rational blueprints of social action ...

... the tug-of-war between the task logic and sentient logic [that is, the logic of meanings and emotions] has created a massive confusion of roles and structure—people interface problems in organizations. Most organizations manifest large dysfunctionalities in their management processes. Their erratic outputs reflect the contrasting pulls of sentient responses and rationally allocated tasks ...

For the *political* domain, these differences may be represented as a set of polar types, remembering always the elementary caution that functioning societies inevitably display some admixture of contrary attributes.

Segmentation versus individualism/universalism

The caste order served historically to segment Indian society with relatively hard-set boundaries, embedding persons firmly within such groups as the *jati* or the joint family; apart from the sect, the category 'voluntary association' would have had few tenants.

At the heart of an electoral, participative 'democracy' lies the citizens' capacity to relate to each other open-endedly and to co-operate (as well as quarrel) within a generally accepted framework, over a variety of purposes, including the establishment of durable institutions which mobilize support routinely for various public representations, and forming political parties with open membership. These capacities are necessarily blunted by the habits arising in the segmentation of social space. That segmentation is not final; yet its erasure may call for ideas, effort, and motivation of an order which cannot be taken lightly for granted.

At issue, however, is not merely the capacity for electoral and other forms of political mobilization. On one side, we may make a near tautology: the stronger a society's routines for relating to strangers open-endedly and fairly, the less ethnic conflict it would have, and therefore the smaller its investment of energies and resources for coping with it. The routines to make strangers feel welcome, to relate to them, and to incorporate them into the social web of their new localities have in

India been necessarily affected by the codes of social distance established in the caste order. The principal routine provided within the society historically has been one of fitting an incoming *group* as such within the order of segmentation, possibly with a minor role in one or another ceremony. In a de-sacralizing *milieu*, involving very large numbers of migrants taking diverse routes, such routines are un-availing, and varied tensions tend to settle on the ethnic interface.

On the other side, a political system's capacity to achieve its objectives depends largely on its constituent elements' capacities to achieve *their* objectives. Crucial in a large, industrializing society today are its organizations and institutions, with personnel picked for their competence, achievements, and potentials—more than for their family or faith or similar attributes. We should therefore ask how the tradition of social segmentation has affected the functioning of these organizations and institutions.

The evidence is fragmentary. The Indian army recruits its members countrywide, and its record of social integration—at least in the officers' corps—is unusually good. Yet its rituals for integration—clubs, parties, a wide range of public activities—draw their models largely from the West; and supporting the rituals is the structure of military command (Cohen, 1971: 182).

Reflecting on a wider range of institutions (*supra*), Garg and Parikh (1988, 129) write of 'large dysfunctionalities' in 'erratic outputs' from 'most organizations ... managed by creating a crisis, anxiety, and fear, or through guilt, control and dependency'.

We may note in passing that, during the colonial period, and especially with Gandhi ascendent, the Indian National Congress did become an open organization; it set an example. Absorbing an alternative, contradictory social code is a process slower than is commonly realized; still one notices that a societal drive to open-ended relatedness has yet to enter India's shared agenda.

In contrast to the embedding of the person in the group, usually the group of one's birth, in India, scholars such as L. Dumont (1970: 133–50),¹ and Taylor (1975: 3–124) see the idea of the *individual* as a creation of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, though others see the 'individual' already being born in twelfth century Europe (e.g. Morris, 1972; Benton, 1982; White, 1978: 333), along with an active ideology of humanism (Southern, 1970). Growing numbers of people, intent on career paths more or less unrelated to their family backgrounds, became available for regrouping in organizations which would have their own logics in which to function. There are

¹ Dumont (1982) has subsequently tracked the transformation of the idea of the individual from ancient Greek thought through early and Augustinian Christianity to later phases in Europe, placed comparatively with India (*see* Dumont, 1986).

numerous instances of voluntary associations, drawing upon the older models of the guild (Reynolds, 1984), and at times these became the bases for sworn fraternities, able to act together politically. By the thirteenth century, one notices a growing capacity to generate new kinds of institutions—new social forms—to advance particular purposes; such 'modern' institutions as the university take off in Europe at that time. Their members did not come randomly from the larger society; yet the membership was substantially open.

Two characteristics of these institutions may be noted: they served to provide social fields which were in principle amenable to indefinite extension; and increasingly operated under regimes of impersonal general rules. In this sense they were *universalist* in their orientation. These institutions and social fields provided too the diverse settings needed to undergo the experiences and to develop the motivations needed to assume wide-ranging public roles.

Use of force: polycentric or centralized?

In pre-colonial India, control over force lay at multiple levels. Control over land in particular localities originated in rights of particular groups arising out of conquest. Such groups—Rajputs in the north, Vellalas in Tamil Nadu, Marathas in the west—came to be called *dominant castes* (Srinivas, 1969: 10ff.). Larger polities did aggregate some force at the Centre, but they rarely had the means to interfere much with the patterns of local dominance, except to appoint an agent to appropriate a part of the local produce. When the Centre weakened, its regional agents or associates could commonly strike out on their own and secure legitimacy for their own regime (on Vijayanagar, Stein (1980: 408ff.); on Mughal successor states, Alam (1986)).

In contrast, the rise of durable bureaucratic structures in Europe from about the twelfth century onwards, facilitated the centralization of control over the use of force within the state, along with the state's monopoly over taxation; the latter yielding the resources needed to pay for the former and for the centralized apparatus of the bureaucracy. The subsequent course of European history has been turbulent. Participative frameworks to exercise power—assemblies to legislate, courts of justice—arose meanwhile, building on varying social and institutional bases in the different regions. Given access to such differentiated frameworks of power, and the growing penalties for the use of force on private account, the latter course lost its attraction.

A priori we may expect that confidence in democratic institutions depends on the regulated conduct of political processes, including conflict, within and outside legislatures; it is likely to be sapped when

these processes are vitiated through the use of violence and other means which are disruptive and are seen to be illegitimate.

Impersonal general rules: a weak tradition

A related issue is that of impersonal general codes. One thinks of such matters as the rules for cricket, traffic rules for crowded highways, the *Indian Penal Code*, the largely unwritten codes of scientific research, and so forth. Such impersonal codes have come to India from the West in the main; for the '*Indian Penal Code*' we may thank Macaulay. The Indian tradition has not been sensitive to the value of such codes because it began early on to organize social space by cutting it up into *jatis* and the like; and how a segment arranged matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and social discipline did not much worry members of other segments.

Modern legislation and Constitutions represent, in contrast, a resort to impersonal rules at a high level of generality. The 'democratic' process—electoral politics, legislation, the separation of the legislature from the executive and the judiciary, all depends on high commitment to the corresponding 'rules of the game', supported by appropriate normative orders. Where the normative support is weak or missing, the 'rules of the game' are flouted more easily, sapping the confidence in due political process.

The 'will of the people', expressed electorally, may be the source of legitimacy of a government; but when the dominant groups over a wide region seek to pre-empt that will through, say, booth-capturing, or if the 'will of the people' in a region is converted to a secessionist cause, or if a general election is won by a party which rejects this form of political legitimacy, the instituted bases of legitimate government and political order are seriously undermined. When the entrenched social order and the salient political opinions pull in directions contrary to the prerequisites to operate the Constitution, strong tensions inevitably arise; there also arise large elements of contingency, of unpredictability, in the outcomes of particular political happenings.

Of the several senses of the term 'autonomy', that of 'independence' or a group's freedom to act unconstrained by external interference or accountability tends to often prevail in India—even though the idea of autonomous, self-directed conduct would be consistent with a full sense of accountability in terms of shared general rules and principles.

Ethic of public responsibility: a weak tradition

One does not easily find in Indian history or mythology, role models

of wide-ranging accountability: a sense of accountability, that is, not merely to one's family or employer but more generally to the society at large and to generations yet unborn. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries offer more of them, but the models there—men like Gandhi and Nehru—do not come clearly out of older Indian historical models. The historic weakness of this ethic in India can also be attributed to social segmentation. Persons have been embedded in their own segment—joint family or *jati* and the like. The taking of wider public responsibilities calls for a range of skills, values, ideas, and motivations: that is, for personality types of a particular kind. As noted earlier, social frameworks appropriate for nurturing them have not been common in Indian history.

Yet, an active ethic of a widely shared sense of public responsibility is essential to a 'democratic' polity. Open polities must have on call persons in adequate numbers willing and able to accept public responsibility accountably, so that the self-seeking urges are bridled. It is due to our historic weakness here that even the kinds of institutions which, elsewhere, have nursed the ethic of public responsibility—say universities or civil services—have been succumbing in India to self-aggrandizement.

4. *Political mobilization: interests and symbols*

While efforts at gathering political support may be analysed along two major axes, namely shared *interests* and shared *symbols*, every situation carries both at some level. Even when one or the other may be salient, these interact continuously in the course of events and their outcomes, as the following illustrations will indicate (Béteille (1970: 35–55)) makes related distinctions).

Let us consider first the efforts at mobilizing around interests perceived to be shared in a group. Gough (1981, 396–406, 419ff.) reports on the mobilization of landless agricultural workers in villages in the eastern part of Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu by the communists since the '40s. Even though the Communist Party's ideology dismisses caste boundaries as false consciousness, in fact its union's reach was confined to the Adi Dravidas in the village. The *jati*'s prior internal social web is a resource for the party's organization; but the latter is unable to mobilize across the gaps with the other landless workers in other *jatis* in the village.

All social arrangements are (wo)man-made, however, and therefore alterable by human effort: in principle, therefore, all lines of segmentation are erasable, given certain kinds of pressure which, however, may not be taken for granted. The practical possibilities in this

direction may be illustrated from a study in an engineering factory, with about 600 employees, in Bombay in 1979 (Panjwani, 1984). Its management constituted work-teams in terms of functional needs, disregarding the ethnic differences. *Informal* groups among the workers, however, followed the bounds of ethnicity almost without exception—and these were displayed at lunch break daily and on other occasions.

In pressing their *economic* interests *vis-à-vis* the management, nearly all workers came together; but they did so under the leadership of trade union organizers from outside the factory. The workers did join a trade union, but their attitude to the trade union was far more economic than ideological. They had engaged in union activity within the factory for over fifteen years, though, in their search for greater economic gain, they had changed their union every few years, opting successively for increasingly militant ones. Yet they were rather indifferent both to the wider ideology of the union and its current sponsoring party, and to the wider political process within which the party might have had larger societal purposes to pursue.

In advancing *class* interests in India, it is perhaps the capitalist class which has been the most successful in recent decades. Its individual members' interests may be pressed through agents lobbying appropriately which, cumulatively, can militate in favour of their class. Furthermore, its class associations—say the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), with its plush office bordering Barakhamba Road in New Delhi—can pay for professionally organized activity in its cause. This seeks to influence public opinion and policies towards advancing the shared interests of its sponsor (Kochanek, 1974). Substantial landed interests in agriculture, likewise, have found the means to be both assertive and effective politically (Bremar (1985) offers a sensitive study from south Gujarat; Hasan (1989), from western Uttar Pradesh). Such public pressure is less easily mounted by those speaking for, say, landless labour or workers in the informal sector, who command fewer resources—and whose efforts at mobilization often run into violent opposition not only from the locally dominant but also from the state (Bremar, 1985).

The Indian political stage has long been crowded by movements centred on certain symbols and, associated with these, a sense of identities. Given a segmented society with a received hierarchy, marked by sharp ritual disabilities, many of those who had been held down sensed an opportunity in a changed political order: the colonial regime had not backed the caste order fully, and it gave way to the explicit, socially egalitarian premises of the Constitution.⁵ An

⁵ There has been a tendency to contest the disabilities to which an individual has been subject, even if insisting on one individual's privileges *vis-à-vis* those of others, located

individual may expect to be able to improve his or her shared location in society, however, only if those who are affected can press their claims collectively, in the political and other public arenas.

The case of the Nadars in southern Tamil Nadu has been explored in detail (Hardgrave, 1970). Questions of status and civil rights loomed large in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the Nadar women's right to cover their breasts in public and the Nadars' right to enter temples. These efforts succeeded gradually, and numerous Nadars have recorded diverse patterns of achievement. The capacity for such mobilization is subject, however, to a general pattern over time. As a group's struggles over status and disabilities succeed, the intra-caste economic and other disparities may become much more visible: strata within the *jati* begin to draw apart, sapping its motivation for collective action.

A *jati*'s internal differentiation is only one among the checks on efforts at such political mobilization. On one side, given political ambition, the politician, bidding for larger stakes, turns to symbols which are general, not bound to specific groups or localities, and therefore may reach a broader spectrum of potential followers (Kothari and Maru (1970) discuss the case of the Kshatriyas of Gujarat). Maximally, this permits the emergence of such large entities as the Muslim League, D.M.K, Shiv Sena, and Bharatiya Janata Party.

On the other side, such horizontal mobilization encounters the magnate's and the political leader's efforts at vertical mobilization, often aided by flows of patronage, or at least of expectations of this—a drive which may cleave into any axis. Consequently, the patterns of support in any given case, are commonly composed, *ad hoc*, from horizontal *jati*-like ties, evocation of broad-band symbols, and vertical ties of patronage—not to mention the use, or threat, of coercion (Hawthorn, 1982: 209–13).

5. Political change, post-1947

Modernity or tradition?

An earlier image of India—as in Max Weber's *Religion of India*—had stressed its changelessness, beneath the ripples of birth and death of individuals and dynasties. Retracting partly from this image, students of Indian society during the '50s and '60s tended to emphasize how

still lower down on the scale (e.g. Gough, 1981: 301ff.; Radhakrishnan, 1989: 264). No alternative ideology for open-ended mutual relatedness has gained much ground except in small pockets of the intelligentsia.

amenable India's entrenched motivations and institutions were for novel purposes. These purposes have ranged from simple ones like migration from one area to another (Rowe, 1973), and wide-ranging occupational changes (e.g. van den Dungan, 1968), to more complex ones like entrepreneurship, commercial and industrial. Illustratively, Singer highlighted early the ease with which Brahmin and other industrialists in Madras could combine the practice of traditional religion and joint family organization with thrusting contemporary enterprise (1972: 272–366).

More recent illustrations may be taken from cooperatives. Sustaining the sugarcane producers' cooperative mills in Maharashtra is, in large part, the Maratha peasant caste identity and sentiments (Baviskar, 1980: 20–37; Attwood, 1988), and the Kaira milk cooperatives in Gujarat have risen on Patidar solidarity (George, 1988: 401–4). In both cases, the dominant groups have brought in producers of other *jatis* too, partly in order to optimize the scale of production appropriate to the better technologies available. The governance of the sugar cooperatives has been substantially democratic; and their social and material resources have gone into wider electioneering too.⁶ Alongside these success stories, however, one has to see the sadder experiences elsewhere (for West Bengal, Bandyopadhyaya and von Eschen (1988); for Haryana, Batra (1988)).

For the political arena, this wider theme was inflected by political sociologists, led by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, into two areas. We have already considered one: the amenability of social ties within the cellular social order for political, including electoral, mobilization. The other area concerns the indigenous, pre-colonial social ideas and practices. It was noticed that Gandhi, particularly, could make many of these work effectively for him in vastly changed circumstances. His lifting of local Gujarati forms of protest to satyagraha at the national level has drawn special comment (Basham, 1971; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967); but the practices at issue were much more widespread in India (Dharampal, 1971).

The 'modernity of tradition' line of thought and enquiry in the '50s and '60s had an optimistic quality which may be judged liberal or naive, depending on one's sympathies. It tended to applaud, by and large, elements from the tradition which were conducive to the orderly functioning of political processes in democratic institutions; and grossly overstated the case. It ignored other aspects of the situation, less congenial for the democratic processes. These were of

⁶ Attwood (1989, 16–20) has demonstrated that, in recent decades, this chain of sugar cooperatives has generated a grassroots, snowballing techno-economic and socio-political process on a scale which, in Maharashtra, effectively sidelines the logic of the cellular caste order.

two kinds. On one side were the convergent, *authoritarian* legacies of the colonial order and of indigenous Indian traditions (for a trenchant discussion, see Guha (1989: 233–64)). On the other were the disjunctions between premises underlying the two sets of traditions, Indian and European. The implications of these aspects have become more manifest since the '70s.

During the earlier period, when the sociologically inclined observers underlined the resilience of the traditions, social and political orderliness appears to have prevailed rather well. Stabilizing influences came from several sides:

1. the received patterns of social control *within* the cellular society were still largely intact, tending to confine persons within their groups, and to restrain the tendency to anomic assertiveness;

2. the colonial institutions—including the 'steel frame' of the civil service—were entrenched and effective in maintaining public order; and

3. the ruling political group had partaken of the glow, if not been chastened in the fire, of the national movement. It carried a respected image of sacrifice and public service. In its emergence, the elements of competitive electoral politics and self-aggrandizement had not been decisive—as these were to become in later decades.

The context after Independence served to open up a variety of political and economic arenas dramatically. *Politically*, with the departure of the alien, colonial power, and with new political arenas established, a multitude of groups and coalitions—competing for diverse objectives, and trying out even more diverse strategies—filled the stage. *Economically*, despite planning and chants of socialism, the drive for industrialization and economic diversification inevitably had disruptive social consequences: the small producer—say of sugar or shoes or cloth—was pitted against large corporations and at times multinationals. Increasingly, over the decades, the political and economic arenas became crowded with shrill drives to protect or advance the interests of individual group interests—and the actors' time horizons have often been miniscule.

On the other hand, there have been considerable movements of population: as persons tried to move away from local stagnancy to distant opportunity, or as agricultural lands were acquired for industrial, urban, and other uses, such movements have often entailed serious disruptions in the older patterns of settlement and social organization; individual ties with the natal group may thin out without much else to replace them.⁷

⁷ *Apropos* the scene in the late '60s, Bêteille noted that the caste order as a system of inequalities had been clearly declining and that there was 'no general evidence' of 'a

Erosion of the cellular order

The foregoing had implications for the public political domain: many previously quiescent groups became activated, and the older social forms in the localities underwent more or less severe disruption. The national movement under Gandhi had taken the idea of collective assertiveness to the grassroots; the parties of the left—socialists and communists—provided this activism with ideological support, articulative skills, organizational abilities, and forms for dramatic public display and protest. The cellular order was being shaken seismically, with a slowly rising intensity. As the old line of separation became less serviceable, a new consciousness of rights arose in all manner of groups.

Sensing the advantage of numbers, partly in the electoral arithmetic, some of smaller, older social groups began to coalesce into larger categories, linking together groups spread over wide regions, or groups which discovered a new identity of interests overriding their erstwhile social separation (Béteille, 1970) explores the underlying logic in relation to the modern history of Tamil Nadu). The industrial workplace displayed its own frameworks of power and of interests, allowing space for 'class' mobilization, and efforts at such mobilization met with some success in rural areas too, bypassing the cellular order.

Yet other social categories, creatures of the emergent social, economic, and institutional structures, began to press their claims in the public arenas: airline pilots, blind students, Scheduled Caste government officers, and the victims of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal in 1984—all these illustrating the variety of clamorous voices. Actors on the stage of 'popular' movements were infinitely various, to be sure; yet the impulses behind them have commonly been parochial, segmented, often devoid of larger, shared visions such as might have cumulative, *constitutive* significance for the system overall.

To sum up, the older cellular order has been losing not only its ability to confine persons to their segments but also its capacity to set norms for and to regulate the social process. Have other regulatory resources grown in compensation?

The new institutions

Simultaneously with the declining vitality of the caste order, diverse

system of antagonistic groups' or classes with 'consciously organized interests': 'the predominant impression is one of *amorphousness* rather than structure' (Béteille, 1974, 110; emphasis mine). Two decades later, social spaces such as those of migrant and casual workers are sometimes seen as having 'pulverized' their older group.

formal, public institutions have proliferated in India over the past two generations. These institutions encompass a wide gamut of shapes and sizes and purposes: from commercial corporations through academic institutions and various non-governmental organizations to the organs of government itself. We are particularly interested in institutions which are meant to set and pursue distinctive, autonomous institutional goals. In principle, these can perform the functions of setting norms and standards in the public arenas and sustaining these over time, and of regulating conflict between competing groups, formally or informally.

Traditionally, in India, the norm setting and regulative functions have rested substantially within the particular segments in the cellular order; historically, the skills for establishing institutions *outside* the world of caste and kinship were not much exercised. Stepping into this gap, during the struggle for independence, the leadership of the national movement—men like Gandhi and Nehru and women like Aruna Asaf Ali—had begun, willy-nilly, to set the norms and standards appropriate to the enlarged public arenas which had been emerging. With the transfer of power to Indian hands, this leadership of the national movement moved in to preside over the apparatus of government which had been established by the colonial regime. The colonial bureaucracy had functioned reliably, if only in the management of routine functions; and this combination—of a political leadership which had been setting beneficial norms with a relatively reliable bureaucracy—served Nehru well.

In pursuing the variety of objectives which came to flood the public arena after 1947 and taking the cue largely from current practice in the West, a large number of public institutions has arisen in India over the decades. The reservoir of skills available for designing, and motivations for operating, an institution around the technical imperatives of its task has, however, been limited.⁸ No confident, authoritative, distinctly Indian institutional ideology or style, appropriate for a wide range of settings, has emerged. What prevails are *ad hoc* arrangements and practices, reflecting the situational equations between dominant persons and groups, and a growing tendency towards anomic behaviour, towards normlessness.⁹

⁸ The consequent difficulties become particularly manifest in some contexts of major technological changes (see Salaman, 1988, for the experience with a new coal-mining technology in Bihar). Garg and Parikh, 1988, quoted earlier, offers a more general appraisal. For a report on the erosion of standards in the judiciary, see *India Today*, 1990.

⁹ A crucial exception must be noted. Since its inception in the mid-'20s, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) has not merely grown into a major 'voluntary' organization itself; it has also spawned, and provided organizational muscle for numerous affiliates

Crucial in this process has been a qualitative change in the political leadership: after 1947, it was success in electoral fora that became the prime criterion for advancement in politics. When the number of votes counted is decisive, such factors as the patronage controlled for securing a body of clients, the cash available to buy votes, and the musclemen to capture booths may count in equal measure. Men and women of unquestionable turpitude, and worse, have increasingly been rising to power and authority. No wonder then that, with every successive decade after Independence, there should have been a growing tendency to use the political domain for private aggrandizement: a tendency led by politicians, usually acting in concert with bureaucrats, many of whom have learned the advantages of compliance.

Disordered social spaces

The public spaces in India, then, have come to be crowded with the combative assertiveness of a large variety of groups, pursuing diverse, often incompatible objectives. Inevitably, these groups come into conflict. The larger milieu has strong anomic tendencies, however, and orderly modes for resolving conflict are not always available. Consequently, recourse to force in settling disputes becomes commonplace: violence by castes asserting their dominance in the localities and by those challenging it, by rival mafias active, say, in the coal belt in Bihar, by groups aroused to communal passions, by terrorist groups, and by the agencies of the state. Resort to reprisals can lead to prolonged cycles of violence. As the frequency of violence spreads in everyday life over larger regions, the different levels of the polity tend to alternate between growing disorder and authoritarianism (for an early, cautious interpretation, see Manor, 1983).

6. *In conclusion*

It may be useful to refer India's recent political experience to a classic

active over a staggering range of objectives. Within the segmented Hindu social space, the RSS has been a unifying, and otherwise creative, influence (Andersen and Damle, 1987).

Its ideology in entirety binds it to the 'Hindu' category, however; and in a multi-religious society, with a long history of aggressive religious antagonisms, its growing assertiveness, both directly and through such affiliates as *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) and *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), is seen as a serious threat by others, who can be driven to desperation. The long trail of bloody communal rioting, in 1990-2, around the mosque/temple issue at Ayodhya was witness to the destructive, disintegrative implications of its style.

sociological contrasts set out in the German terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (original formulation by Toënnies (1971, 67ff., 77ff.); recent considerations include Nisbet (1966)). The underlying conception may be seen as that of a transition *from* a society in which a person's security lies primarily in belonging to a community to one in which the security comes from the working of impersonal, general laws promulgated by the state. Nineteenth century European observers posited that their societies had been undergoing this transition.

The suggestion that we in India are witnessing the end of *Gemeinschaft*, the end of a sense of community, can be made only cautiously since, in the heavily segmented social universe, the sense of community had a particular quality. It was strong *within* the *jati*, with a relatively high intensity of internal give and take. Some sense of community was there in the locality too, though it was necessarily cleaved, given the fact of segmentation. To be sure, the relationships of marriage, religion, revenue, trade, and so forth reached well beyond one's locality; but the skills of creating new communities, except within the caste logic, were scarcely practised.

In contrast to the European situation (Nisbet, 1966, 73ff.), however, it can be suggested that in India the (weak sense of) *Gemeinschaft* may be passing, without the rise of *Gesellschaft*—that is, the sense of a rule-based society; for *Gesellschaft* grew in Europe out of an acceptance of *general* principles and of laws underlying contracts and the like. The beginnings of an allegiance to, and the habits and institutions to work with such general principles, go back there to the eleventh century—and then it was reviving ideas and practices originating in ancient Rome.

That is to say, a *general legal order* was becoming part of a hallowed tradition in Europe by, say, the fourteenth century. Subsequently, it was available as a major support for social orderliness: say for resisting the socially corrosive aspects of migrations and of the growing scales of capitalist trade and industrial production. In India, in contrast, a general legal order came as part of the *colonial* package. It is very far from being hallowed as part of an entrenched, indigenous tradition. On the contrary, all its associations are alien, colonial!

So we in India search collectively for ideas in terms of which this society may be reconstituted—and also for ways of bringing these ideas into a widely shared sense of what might prevail as 'common-sense'; these processes are necessarily slow, glacially slow, and perhaps uncertain.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

1 The state

The state is a durable apparatus to maintain order and to set and pursue the collective purposes of a political community. The creation and maintenance of this apparatus require an amalgam of diverse skills, values, ideas, and motivations; and the society at issue must have routines to generate and make widely available the crucial skills, values, ideas, and motivations needed to make this apparatus work. Needless to say, for these routines to be durable and reliable, they would have to be institutionalized. Put summarily, the quality of a state depends on the institutionalized generation and diffusion of certain crucial skills, values, ideas, and motivations directed towards operating a durable apparatus for maintaining order and for setting and pursuing collective purposes in the political community.

2 Defining elements of a democratic political structure

A Constitution

In England, an unwritten Constitution has evolved over the centuries, by convention and by piecemeal legislation; but other political communities, beginning in sharp discontinuities—of a revolution or a colonial withdrawal—need, or may feel that they need, formal Constitutions which spell out, relatively durably, the rules for the community's principal political games.

The Constitution is a charter for arrangements to maintain the society in good order. When drafted by professionals proficient in the legal tradition, it should meet such standards as the criteria of consistency, an internal hierarchy of operative norms, and a distribution of functions such as would meet the historically learned imperatives for stability, probity, effectiveness, and the like. Likewise, its promulgation, along with that of other laws, by a system of courts, operated by a professional body of judges and lawyers, would be a step in advancing a rational legal order in the society (but *see* Section 2). Such an order may be taken as an essential, vital part of a large-scale democratic polity. It would define the processes which legitimize the actions of those who are called upon to govern.

Differentiated structure of parties

Multiple parties, differentiated by ideology and/or by their social and institutional bases, yet broadly accepting the Constitution, have been the norm at least in the more complex societies. Optimally, there would be substantial overlap between these parties in their interpretations of the past, perceptions of the present, and visions of the future—so that they might alternate in power without having to undo each other's work wastefully. Single party systems have been tried in the Communist countries but, in eastern Europe and elsewhere, are currently being abandoned. Likewise, their long-term viability in Africa too remains to be established (Gupta, 1975).

Acts of choice

Periodic opportunities to choose and to reject who should govern are central to the democratic process in a large-scale society. Historically, in the West, the franchise has broadened gradually, as successively underprivileged strata have wrested it for themselves. Universal adult franchise had become the rule in western democracies by the mid-twentieth century. It appeared to be self-evident then that other, newer, polities should follow suit (for discussions in the Indian Constituent Assembly, *see* Austin (1966: 46–9)); though cautious observers have hinted at the hazards entailed in so precipitate a plunge (e.g. Myrdal, 1968: 774). Some polities have already had to formally retreat to more restrictive ground (e.g. Pakistan, and until recently Nepal), while, elsewhere, the restrictions may be imposed informally through such devices as buying vote banks and capturing electoral booths.

Legislature(s)

Though executive power is handled most efficiently by a relatively small number, democratic practice has evolved to provide for a larger assembly: its members are more accessible, and may hold the executive to account on behalf of their own constituencies as well as of the larger political community.

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Evolving Trends in the • 6 Bureaucracy

B P R VITHAL

Introduction

The bureaucracy in India is neither monolithic nor homogeneous. This would, perhaps, be true of any bureaucracy, to the extent that it reflects the social and class composition of society at large and of the ruling class in each society in particular. In the case of India, however, heterogeneity of the bureaucracy was consciously planned by the British in view of the peculiar circumstances of their rule. To begin with, the administration of the East India Company—in India—was entirely in the hands of Company servants who were British nationals. When they first became rulers (from being mere traders), they acquired that status by grants which were in the nature of feudal grants which the then rulers of India were customarily giving to their own citizens. Finally, the Company took over the role of the major feudatory, namely the Emperor in Delhi. For some time the Company retained only this role and as such the question of Indians becoming direct employees of the Company in any administrative capacity did not arise. .

With the dominion in India extending, and the complexity of its administration increasing, Indians had to be brought in to take up subordinate positions. The entire structure underwent a change as a result of the Crown taking over the administration directly and, more so, as a consequence of the educational policy of Macaulay, which aimed to 'form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern'. This class, which to this day substantially rules India, came to be known by the widely prevalent term 'babus' (Moon, 1990: 466). With the entrance of Indians into it, British administration which was vertically integrated became highly articulated. It consisted of three modules (which could also be described as echelons or levels). It is necessary to describe these three echelons briefly because the evolution of Indian bureaucracy, its changing self-perception, and its relations with the public in general and politicians in particular, have varied significantly.

The top echelon consisted of the Covenanted Services (now known as the All India Services), of which the most typical and best-known service was the Indian Civil Service (ICS).¹ The British concept of the ICS was unique not merely as a Colonial Service but, at the time of its original conception, also as a tool of administration itself. After the ancient Chinese system, this was, perhaps, the first Civil Service to be deliberately and consciously constituted on the basis of recruitment by means of examination. The role conceived for this Service was also unique because it heralded the transformation of the British administrator from ruler to guardian (Mason, 1985). When Indians were taken into the ICS, the initial screening and separation from their origins and their admission to a new culture was effected through the educational system and, subsequently, their training in the Oxbridge milieu. The Service succeeded, by and large, in building up a tradition of integrity and professional competence that helped to impart to it a unique aura.

Whatever may have been its negative aspects, by virtue of its being the Service of a foreign ruler, were removed with Independence. But its aura burgeoned and continued to attract young men and women to the All India Services. Inflation considerably reduced its material and monetary attractions, though many young men and women still chose it partly because of its continuing prestige and, also, partly as a means of serving the country without undue sacrifice. As Nehru once remarked, the IAS definitely became Indian; some of its members tried to be Civil; and service was at least one of its motives. Subsequently, professions and management posts in the private sector became

¹ We shall continue to use the term 'Covenanted Services', because not only are all its connotations not fully brought out by the term 'All India Services', but also it is homophonic with 'Coveted Services' which would be an apt malapropism.

economically attractive. Passing the entrance examination of the Indian Institute of Technology became as much a cause for celebration as passing the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) examination once used to be. However, over the years, with professional employment opportunities not growing adequately and with the terms and conditions of such employment not always being much more attractive than those of the IAS (except in the case of large industrial houses or the multinationals), the higher administrative and allied services again became an attractive option. Those who were motivated to serve found that the variety of work of an IAS officer added to the challenge and attraction of the Service, while the power and opportunities available for Senior Civil Servants in an administration with a large number of bureaucratic restrictions and controls made it attractive for those who liked the trappings of authority.

In 1985, when Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister, the approach of Government to the Services underwent a dramatic change. P. Chidambaram, the Minister for Personnel, brought his influence to bear on the bureaucracy, in an effort to make it more professional. This resulted in an improvement in the emoluments of the central government Services to make them comparable with other professions in trade, commerce, and industry. However, this policy was attacked on the ground that it was financially ruinous. The effect of the changes was to make the higher civil services more attractive to young persons seeking professional careers. A conscious effort was made in the media to 'sell these Services', and the higher civil services came to be looked upon as a good career prospect.

This by itself need not have resulted in a change of motivation among new entrants, because the pursuit of a career, in a professional sense, would need the same skills and attitudes that the earlier approach would have encouraged. However, a 'hard sell' of the civil services also encourages certain elements who can best be described as 'careerists'. Such a change of attitude would tend to underplay the earlier 'service' aspect of the higher civil services and, instead, emphasize the opportunities available for exploiting the power of the state which administers, controls, and dispenses patronage. That the public are also aware of these particular advantages is evident from the fact that the valuation of these Services in the dowry market has gone up. The dowry market in Indian society serves the same purpose in evaluating relative job prospects as the share market does for financial investments in Western countries.

The next echelon in the administration is another unique British contribution, namely the Gazetted Officers (GOs). Such Officers could be Indians even at a time when Indians had not yet been admitted to the Indian Civil Service. They were given a certain status

and symbols, and privileges of office, which distinguished them from the mass of the lower officialdom, who were also Indians and who then came to be known as Non-Gazetted Officers (NGOs). It is interesting to note that, apart from other conditions, one of the distinguishing features of these Services was that their postings and transfers were to be published in the official gazette! By such innocuous and token formalities, the British managed to generate status and authority. This was a device which Indians also readily understood and relished because it reflected, in administration, their own concept of the 'twice-born' who, by merit of birth (recruitment) and by peculiar rituals (gazetting), were differentiated from and placed on a higher level than the ordinary people (NGOs). An interesting example of the grip exercised by this idea on the Indian psyche, which persisted even after Independence, is the Andhra Pradesh secretariat. In that part of it which was inherited from the Madras Presidency, there were NGOs (even as late as in 1959) who would wear trousers and a jacket but not a tie, because it was assumed that only GOs were entitled by custom to don a necktie!

The next tier down consisted of NGOs who constituted the rest of the administration. The term 'Non-Gazetted Officer' is itself a novel classification for, during the colonial period, 'officers' were, by definition, 'gazetted', and all 'non-gazetted' government servants were referred to as 'officials'. But with Independence, the new government sought to 'decolonize' the bureaucracy by erasing the distinction between Gazetted and Non-Gazetted government servants by referring to both as 'officers'. By a similar process of upgradation, peons became attenders and were accorded the status of Class IV government servants.

There was, however, one top layer of this part of the administration in the Civil Services which acted as a link between the administration as a whole and the Gazetted Officers, or in some cases directly with the Covenanted Services. These were officials who occupied the key posts of personal assistants to the members of the Covenanted Services or those holding top level superintending posts. In the Army, the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) represented this particular level between the Other Ranks (ORs), on one side, and the Commissioned Officers (COs), on the other. In the Civil Services, the picture became somewhat blurred because the category of Gazetted Officers was interposed between the Covenanted Services and the NGOs.

The importance of this level here lies in the link it provided between the higher Civil Services, on the one hand, and the mass of the Civil Service, on the other. The character of this link evolved from the way in which British officials deployed the particular Indian functionary in their entourage. The relationship between the British

official and his personal assistant was maintained by mutual respect. Indian administrators in general have not been able to emulate the example of their British forbears in this respect, perhaps because both belong to the same cultural milieu. This relationship of mutual respect has been preserved to a much greater extent in the military by means of an artificial ethos built within and around the Armed Services. In the Civil Services, by contrast, democratization of the civil administrations since Independence has stood in the way of the British colonial convention being continued. As a consequence, intra-service links have tended to become rigidly formalized and the different echelons have drifted apart. It is interesting to note that, in a few cases where the peculiar mystique of these posts has been retained, they have sometimes become conduits of corruption involving officers of the higher echelons.

Each of the three echelons of administration, namely, the Covenanted Services, the Gazetted Services and Non-Gazetted Services, has evolved in its own way since Independence. The most important changes in respect of the Non-Gazetted Services relate to their unionization. This has resulted in a greater homogeneity in their outlook, despite the fact that there are usually several Unions representing different categories within the Non-Gazetted category. The Gazetted Officers as a group have generally lost out during the post-Independence period. The distinction between Gazetted Officers and Non-Gazetted Officers helped the Government in dealing with strikes by the latter, but the resulting benefit to the Gazetted Officers was insufficient to compensate the sense of alienation between the two categories inherited from the Raj. For, with Independence, the government's efforts to improve the status of Gazetted Officers foundered on the rock of translating them into monetary equivalents. Separation from the Non-Gazetted Services has been followed by Gazetted Officers enjoying commensurate non-monetary benefits. As a consequence, the Gazetted Officers, including professional services such as doctors and engineers, have tended to unionize. Their problems, however, fall into a different category because they raise issues concerning generalists *versus* specialists, which are not discussed here.

Administrators as a sociological category

How do these three categories fit into the paradigm provided by Bardhan's concept of 'professionals' as a 'proprietary class' exploiting their 'cultural capital' and extracting 'rent' income from their scarce educational and technical skill, and Rudra's related concept of the

class of 'intelligentsia'. In his discussion of these various concepts, Vanaik (1990: 25) has stated that

bureaucratic élites at the Centre are far less susceptible to the pressure of the agrarian bourgeoisie ... [while] in the States[,] the more localised the bureaucracy, the more subordinated it is to the power of the rural rich. The industrial bourgeoisie clearly exercises greater authority on the bureaucracy at the Centre ...

The NGOs and the GOs, being employees of the State Government, are mostly subject to pressures from the agrarian bourgeois elements which are strongly represented in the State governments and legislatures. The IAS officer is subject to pressures from the industrial bourgeoisie when (s)he is at the Centre while (s)he is subject to pressure by the agrarian bourgeoisie when (s)he works at the State level. Most politicians, however, are still graduating from agrarian bourgeois politics at the State level to politics at the Central level. Politicians rooted in the modern urban-industrial complex, with interests hardly distinguishable from those of the industrial bourgeoisie, are still few in number. This has helped strengthen the role of the IAS officer at the Centre because, among the many Central Services directly employed by the Central Government with whom (s)he has to compete when (s)he is at the Centre, (s)he belongs to the only category of officer which has direct working acquaintance with the politician at the State level. The insights of IAS officers into the mutual interests of agriculture and industry (or their mutual contradictions) are, therefore, likely to be sharper than those of other functionaries at the Centre. While their relations may thus be synergic, it still does not make them a '*Neta-Babu*' class, as Krishna maintains (Vanaik, 1990: 23). Class interests and cultural background could be expected to fuse together only at the lower level of district politician and the NGO. Again, at the top level, an urban-orientated industrial-professional-higher civil service class may well be emerging.

In discussing the role of the bureaucracy in the liberalization programme, Vanaik (1990: 23) rightly points out that the caution in regard to this programme arises

not because of subterranean resistance from a bureaucratic class [but because] significant sections of the state élite along with important sections of the industrial bourgeoisie are themselves concerned that liberalization should not proceed too far too fast.

It would, therefore, be relevant to point out that a liberalization programme has been launched with great speed; we now have to explain the reasons behind that speed, rather than those underlying the cautious approach of the earlier phase.

Resistance to the liberalization programme is now characterized as mainly 'bureaucratic' in character. Of course, wider issues such as the role played by international capital, international financial institutions, industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie, etc. are involved. But what concerns us in this discussion is that there has been a noticeable change in the attitude of the bureaucratic élite. Part of this change is intellectual and professional in origin, but other motivations have also come into play.

It is necessary to draw attention at this point to the recent acceleration, especially since the '80s, of professionalization within the IAS, the main generalist service. Even in the ICS, a certain informal specialization in finance did take place. Now, as part of the modern concept of 'career development', specialization, after an initial period of common District experience, is being guided and encouraged within the IAS. Specialization leading to jobs in the economic Ministries is the most sought after. The interface with and transition to international financial bodies (such as the IMF and World Bank) takes place from this point onwards. As in all interface phenomena, a certain intellectual seepage occurs at this level. Very soon the players on either side of the international divide find themselves having more in common than the national officials and those whom they are supposed to represent. This is also reinforced by the fact that the discipline of economics, in which those concerned with these decisions are specialists, has been internationalized with a single ruling paradigm and ideology within the framework of which professionals work together.

It cannot be denied, however, that part of the motivation arises from the fact that international financial institutions provide important and attractive career prospects for generalist professionals. Equally importantly, the composition of the IAS itself has undergone a change. In recent years, several persons with qualifications in engineering or management or economics have entered the Service. Children of senior bureaucrats and professionals now exercise their first option in favour of professional courses, whilst the IAS itself is almost invariably only a second choice. To the extent, therefore, that the liberalization programme would be expected to result in increased opportunities for trained professionals in the economy as a whole, the senior bureaucrat would now look upon it as opening a broader and more varied career spectrum for the next generation of his/her class than public sector employment, which is all that the existing model has to offer. Thus, whilst a large part of the IAS is now identifying with the aspirations of the industrial bourgeoisie, there are still a number of officers who are interested in agrarian problems with which they are familiar because of their intimate acquaintance with

the countryside. Therefore, the higher Civil Service is not simply the site occupied by 'political élites' (Vanaik, 1990); a significant fraction of it has, over the last twenty-five years, become involved in 'intra-coalition conflicts' which have become an important feature of politics at the State level.

Politicization of the Civil Services

Against this general background, let us consider the phenomenon of politicization of the Services. When Rajiv Gandhi drew attention (1985) to the need to eliminate power-brokers from the political arena, he also emphasized the need to depoliticize the Services. Without going into a discussion of the term 'politicization', we shall use it in the broad sense in which it is generally understood. Politicization, in the sense of alignment with a political party, is hardly applicable to the civil services except in the case of those whose sympathies lie with one or other of the cadre parties. Politicization in the sense of commitment to an ideology is rare even among card carrying members of non-cadre parties which are really loose coalitions of different groups and interests.

In recent years, however, this situation has changed. Even though the Congress party was defeated in 1977, up to 1989 it was widely regarded as the party with power. The defeat of the Congress in the 1977 election was seen as a reaction to the Emergency rather than as signalling change of a paradigmatic nature. The Janata Government's poor performance gave rise to a widespread belief that the Congress party was the natural ruling party in India. In 1989, however, this outlook was completely shattered. The prospect of a single party monopolizing power indefinitely became truly remote only after the ninth general election.

With the onset of the changed outlook, political parties started to take a hard look at their proposed programmes. In the tenth general election (1991), the preparation of the manifestos of the different parties were, for the first time given serious attention because they could constitute the bases on which coalitions would have to be forged. Therefore, politicization, in the sense of commitment to the principles of a party, is now (unlike in the past) possible. However, even today, those elements in the bureaucracy that are believed to be politically committed would consist of sympathizers of either of the Communist parties or the BJP, which represent the two tendencies with clear-cut programmes and deep commitment.

Politicization of the Services, therefore, largely refers to civil servants playing politics. In most cases, the motivation underlying

politicization lies in the furtherance of one's career or in taking advantage of opportunities to engage in corruption. In the case of the NGOs as a category, however, politicization of a more academic nature, arising from strong unionization, has been possible. The NGOs—in most States as well as at the Centre—are now fairly well organized into unions. Therefore, they tend to form collective perceptions of which government(s) is/are likely to adopt a sympathetic view to their demands. Their approach is generally economic in character.

Political parties attach much importance to securing the support of the NGOs. In fact, the importance attached to NGO support is often out of proportion to their numerical size as potential vote banks. Rather, their importance is seen to rest in their opinion-forming role. Nearly seventy-five per cent of the NGOs are teachers, police constables, and Class IV officers. These categories of government employees are widely distributed. They wield considerable influence and prestige in different segments of society. In recent years, however, the importance attached to employees' unions arises not only because they influence opinion, but also because they play an important role in the election process itself. They are entrusted with the conduct of elections. No booth capturing—except in the most blatant and violent cases—would be possible without the cooperation, or at least connivance, of this category of civil servants. This fact alone has tended to give added importance to transfers of officials on the eve of elections—a factor which can influence the electoral process in no small measure. The politicization of the NGOs (mainly though not solely through unionization) has, therefore, acquired considerable importance.

Politicization at other levels of the civil services, particularly in the higher civil service, proceeds from different considerations. Personal aggrandizement plays a much more important role. These categories are also involved in the electoral process but influence is brought to bear on higher civil servants on an individual basis and not on a group basis (as is the case with NGOs). If politicization at lower levels is related to unionization, at higher levels it is the relationship between the civil servant and the politician (usually a minister) which is important. In the past, factional struggles within the ruling party, rather than party affiliations as such, have influenced this relationship. The political executive in a number of States has made use of senior civil servants in dealing with inner-party dissidence. This has been true of the Centre to date, because of the genealogy of the Prime Ministers and the Presidential style of functioning that they seem to prefer.

With the far-reaching recent changes in the political equations at the Centre, here too politicization of the civil servant is becoming

evident. Straightforward and strict officers can be posted to departments under the control of dissident Ministers; with no overt effort, the Ministers could be compelled to stick to the straight and narrow path. On the other hand, posting an accommodating officer to a Department would automatically result in making the task of the Minister concerned easier. The same logic would also apply to elected local bodies (district boards and below) which the State Government may wish either to curb or to encourage. District Officers can be posted with the object of undermining a dissident politician in his/her home base.

Outlined above are instances of the political executive using the flexibility available within the administration in order to serve its purpose. While it does not automatically follow that these procedures result in politicization, they do initiate and encourage the process. For, in the absence of flexible or accommodating civil servants, it would be impossible to initiate procedures that would lead to politicization. The willingness of a civil servant to assist a Minister in the efficient formulation or implementation of a programme does not, by itself, constitute evidence of politicized behaviour on the part of the former. Thus, there may be (in fact there are) enthusiastic officers whose strong conviction enables them to implement certain programmes, say in the social welfare and social justice spheres. Indeed, a number of enthusiastic officers are identified and posted to such programmes because it is in the interest of any political party in power to do so in order to win elections. Thus, it should not be assumed that when officers show enthusiasm or work closely with a Minister, or some other political authority, that they are necessarily engaging in politicized behaviour. Display of enthusiasm by officers who have no axe to grind can be easily recognized. Their nonconformism may earn them the reputation of mavericks. There are a number of cases in which an officer's enthusiasm is motivated by the prospect of reaping political dividends. Great dynamism brought to bear on the implementation of a costly project by an officer of doubtful integrity can give rise to a difficult choice between the interests of rectitude, on the one hand, and the effective and speedy implementation of a worthwhile programme, on the other.

The postings of officials in the Indian bureaucracy are expected to be based on the principle that Ministers and officials should be able to function smoothly on the basis of institutional arrangements and not on grounds of personal likes and dislikes, though it is understood that there can be exceptions in extreme cases of mutual incompatibility. However, in the course of working together a mutual understanding and a sense of partnership does often develop between civil servants and their political superiors. The basis of this may be honourable or

dubious. If the political head chooses the same official repeatedly, because the particular official's abilities are well known from previous encounters, (s)he may give the impression that his/her motive in making the appointment is 'political'. A senior official of the Government of India is reported to have remarked that 'we are all well trained animals but some of us like to become pets'. It is the 'pet' relationship that is suspect. The statement itself may be regarded as evidence that there are senior officials in the Government of India who are still inclined to resist such practices. In the States, however, the attempt to enforce any consistent rule in these matters has long since been abandoned.

Certain specified posts belong to another category of 'political appointment'. These are made on the principle that they can only be filled by officers with whom the political party in power can function smoothly. This applies to certain key posts such as the Chief Secretary of a State or the Secretaries to the Government of India, or even certain sensitive posts identified in the Constitution.

The practice at present is that, within the constraints of certain conventions of seniority, the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister (as the case may be) exercises her/his prerogative in making the selection of Chief Secretary, Director General of Police, and Cabinet Secretary and other Secretaries. In these cases, a degree of discretion must be left to the political executive. Actual practice is in broad conformity with this requirement. However, the element of political choice has not been openly acknowledged to date, the justification given for selection or otherwise being on the basis of 'neutral' criteria. This—it must be said—is less than fair practice. It is necessary, therefore, for the procedure to be formalized and certain conventions openly established. This applies also to certain other appointments which are formally acknowledged as 'political appointments' (e.g. certain Ambassadorships). As a corollary, the officers so posted should automatically vacate their office when the government changes hands. Once they have been appointed on the basis of the political criterion, they cannot claim that they should continue in such posts (beyond the tenure of the political Executive which appoints them in the first place) on the ground that they are experts.

'Political interference' is a phenomenon related to, but different from, politicization as such. In a democracy, whether it be Presidential or Parliamentary, a political executive heads the Executive branch of government. (S)he thereby derives legitimate authority to take executive action through the bureaucratic apparatus, in accordance with her his political commitment and within the constraints of the Constitution. An action of a political nature conveyed as a direction by the political executive to the bureaucracy under its control will,

therefore, be a legitimate one, even if it is based on political considerations or has political consequences. The term 'interference' is, however, applied to actions which involve political pressure or exercise of influence through channels other than legitimate ones.

Political interference can take place both vertically and laterally. It might, at first sight, appear unusual that interference should be exercised vertically, as executive power can be exercised through legitimate channels. However, this occurs wherever an intermediate bureaucratic level resists directions of a political nature and cannot be overruled because of the legal or Constitutional legitimacy of such resistance. For instance, a minister may have a secretary who resists taking action along the lines desired—and has good reasons for doing so—which the minister is unable or unwilling (sometimes for reasons of adverse publicity) to overrule formally.

In such cases, it is sometimes easier to influence the lower levels to initiate action along the lines desired by the minister, so that when the matter reaches the secretary's level, it is s/he who would have to overrule a report or a proposal that has come from below. These are cases where political interference takes place vertically down the line to lower levels with a view to weakening or subverting the authority of the higher bureaucratic levels. It is such interference that establishes a contact between the higher political executive and lower officialdom and, eventually, leads to either a politicization of the lower officials or encourages corruption.

Political pressure is exercised laterally when a person who is occupying a position of political importance finds that (s)he has no formal authority over the bureaucracy at that level. For instance, members of the Legislature are politically important and influential persons. Their views are expected to be given due weight by the bureaucracy, but they cannot order the bureaucracy in the way in which a minister can. Nevertheless, members of the Legislature frequently try to exercise pressure over bureaucrats to induce them to take certain actions. There is often an implied threat that if they are not obliged, they would raise the issue in the Legislature or they would approach the minister. When certain powers are devolved to local bodies and the officials concerned are placed under their control, the formal lines of authority that previously ran through the official bureaucracy are transferred to the local body whose Chairperson now exercises authority over the staff. Nevertheless, the political executive at the State level, such as a minister, on the one hand, and other political officials, such as members of the Legislature, on the other, tend to exert pressure directly over the bureaucracy of the local body instead of indirectly through its Chair. Political interference of these various types undermines the morale of the bureaucracy. It also leads

to either politicization or corruption. Table 6.1 gives, in a schematic form, the formal lines of authority and informal lines of influence or interference.

The 'committed' civil servant

During the Emergency, civil servants were expected to be 'committed'. It is difficult to define this concept. If 'politicization' is linked to political parties, 'commitment' is linked to beliefs, ideologies, or values and, therefore, to programmes based on these. But it may also have a negative connotation when the stress is on commitment to certain personalities and their political futures.

There is clearly a difficulty in the Indian system, where the civil service remains permanent but governing political parties change. Hopefully, there will always be officers in the civil service who, by temperament or by conviction, feel committed to a programme devised by the party which happens to be in power. This would be a fortuitous circumstance. On the other hand, there may be those who are neutral politically, but still have the capacity to implement the programme efficiently and honestly. There may also be officers opposed to a particular programme for a variety of personal principles. Such officers should be relieved of responsibility for that programme, but not penalized.

This would not apply in the case of opposition to principles incorporated in the Constitution (e.g. 'untouchability is against the law'). A civil servant cannot, for example, plead unwillingness to implement welfare schemes for the 'Scheduled Castes', 'Dalits', and 'Scheduled Tribes' on the ground that (s)he is opposed to the abolition of untouchability. Rather, we are referring to examples such as the case of a senior Muslim official in Hyderabad State (in pre-Independence days) whose wish not to be Commissioner of Liquor Excise because of his religious conviction was respected by the government. In other words, subject to Constitutional limitations, an element of agreement between the authority and the official should be allowed in the process of selection for postings. But the commitment that was elicited during the Emergency appeared to border on the brink of becoming a 'loyalty test', implying that 'If you are not committed, you are omitted'. On the other hand, some officials exploited the idea of committed civil service as a means of rapid professional advancement.

As against those officials who, during the Emergency, may have used their professed commitment as a means of advancement, there have always been those, often belonging to younger age groups, who *have* been committed—in the positive sense of that word—to ideals

and values. Any political party in power can, with justification, select such officials and put them in charge of programmes with a social content, which will then be well implemented. Conversely, when a party in power wants to 'soft-pedal' certain schemes (which may be identified with its predecessor), its instinct would favour the transfer of such officers. A transfer by itself is entirely innocuous and within the government's remit (particularly those newly come into power), but in such cases the transfers might signal the intentions of the new government.

Commitment, however, need not be identical with, or even result in, political affiliation. It is, therefore, necessary to examine how politicization of the civil service appears to have spread in a system in which genuine political affiliation or commitment is not widespread. Political affiliation, in the sense of a more than usual affinity to those belonging to the political executive, arose in the early phase of Independence. It was more or less characterized by the common class background of those who constituted such groups.

Immediately after Independence, not only were the Congress leaders who took office widely accepted and respected but they also shared the social background of the senior civil servants whom they inherited from the colonial state. Thus, for example, the Nehrus' social background was no different from that of the senior ICS officers of those days; even Patel, who was from a rural background, had trained as a barrister in London; Rajagopalachari actually felt more at home with the ICS officers when he was Prime Minister of Madras (1937–9) than with certain elements in the Congress party (which would later support Kamaraj). Against such a background, not only did the senior civil servants experience no difficulty in functioning closely and loyally with the political executive, but they could do so to an extent which today could be labelled 'politicization'.

The political process subsequent to Independence gave rise to changes in the class composition of the political executive that were more far-reaching and rapid than changes in the social composition of the civil services. Recruitment to the political executive, especially at the State level and below, came to be increasingly based on vernacular education, whereas recruitment to the civil services continued to take place for a long time through the English medium. The growing disparity between the class background of the political executive and the civil servants was, therefore, a reflection of the difference between the criteria for entry into the two spheres. As a consequence, the political executive came to represent a much wider social and class span than the civil services.

The caste factor

The entry of the caste factor into the civil services changed the nature of the processes outlined above. Even without formal reservation, caste was an unstated but relevant factor which entered the process of recruitment both to the political executive and to the civil services. In the initial phase, the upper castes were heavily represented in both spheres and the general congruence in outlook between them could not be separated easily from their class origins. With the introduction of caste reservation in the services, the composition of the services changed progressively. However, despite reservation, the representation of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Backward Classes (BCs) in the services is still below the percentages stipulated in the statute.

In Andhra Pradesh (as at the beginning of 1989) the proportion of SC employees in the service as a whole was close to the statutory figure of 15 per cent. But, if this figure is disaggregated, we will find that the overall percentage is made up of 22 per cent SC employees in the Class IV category, 12 per cent in the Class III category, 5.5 per cent in Class II, and only 4 per cent in Class I (against a statutory figure of 15 per cent in each Class). This is partly due to the earlier imbalance not yet having been rectified, but it is also due to the fact that, even in fresh placements, the Employment Exchanges have been able to place only 57 per cent of the vacancies reserved for the SCs. Therefore, in the higher services the proportion of SCs is only in the range of 4 to 6 per cent. The Backward Classes would be better represented than the SCs, but would still not meet the reservation figure. Nevertheless, as a result of these reservations the services now have the same spread of castes as the political executive. In this respect, there has been a decisive shift in the caste composition of the services.

The spread of castes occurs even in categories where there is no formal reservation. For instance, there is no statutory provision for a proportionate number of different castes in the cabinet. Equally, there are no such provisions for Vice Chancellors of Universities or the higher judiciary. In fact, however, an informal caste rotation does apply to all these categories. There is thus a rainbow coalition not only in the political executive and the civil services, but also in the judiciary and all other important public offices. As a result, the gravitational pull between different spheres of life, including the political executive and the civil services, operates along caste lines. Thus, for example, during an earlier period, an officer wishing to use political influence would go to the minister with whom he worked or had previously worked, or who belonged to his district. But, since the '70s/'80s, this situation has changed radically. Officers now go to ministers belonging to the same castes. Each minister, whose appointment owes much

to his importance as leader of his caste, considers himself to be the protector and the godfather of all the officials in the government who belong to his caste. The civil servants, for their part, reciprocate such a sentiment, though there are rare cases of choice running counter to such a practice.

This raises the question of whether only those officials belonging to a particular caste can be entrusted with the task of implementing, efficiently and enthusiastically, schemes intended for the welfare of that caste. There may be officials belonging to other castes who are genuinely devoted to the welfare of the SCs and BCs. In some cases, they may even be the most suitable among the officers available for the task. In such a case, should a less suitable officer be selected merely because (s)he belongs to a particular caste? Here a distinction has to be made between schemes which are purely of a welfare nature and schemes which are intended to protect specific castes or instil confidence in them. In the former case, the efficiency and enthusiasm of the official should be given greater weight than his/her caste origin.

The position is, however, different where the confidence of the caste is an important factor. Many instances are known in which SCs find it easier to represent their grievances to a Collector belonging to their own caste. Even solicitude expressed by a high caste person may carry a hint of condescension or patronage. The response of the SCs is reflected in the difference between their attitude to Gandhi and their feelings towards Ambedkar. The latter symbolizes what the SCs can achieve by themselves whereas the former represents, at best, only support, sympathy and an admission of guilt.

New links between the bureaucracy and the political executive at different levels have been developed along caste lines during the last twenty years. There are also other horizontal links developing as a result of the process of politicization already outlined and institutional changes such as the strengthening of the local bodies to which a number of functions have been devolved. At the same time, the traditional vertical linkages of the bureaucracy through the conventional line of control and authority are being weakened if not altogether vitiated. They are weakened partly as a consequence of these very horizontal links, which provide an opportunity for the lower levels to bypass their superiors through the political channel. The vertical link has also suffered on account of the weakening of the normal mechanisms of control and promotion. Acute controversy surrounds the question of whether merit, as differentiated from seniority, can be a criterion for promotion without undermining the vertical links of control. Thus, there is a great deal of scepticism about the integrity of superior officers and a corresponding readiness to believe complaints alleging caste prejudice.

The link of administrative control has also been weakened by judicial intervention, which deals even with such trivia as transfers. All that is needed is an allegation of *mala fides* and all that is required is a stay order. Neither proof nor final orders carry any importance because of the inordinate time consumed by the judicial process. Officers against whom adverse remarks are passed in assessment reports are given an opportunity to appeal against them. This procedure can lead to the author of an adverse remark having to spend more time justifying it than the subject of the remark defending him/herself. These processes have resulted in an erosion of discipline in the bureaucracy.

Yet the same bureaucracy can be periodically shaken into action and made to perform tasks of considerable administrative complexity with great efficiency. The conduct of elections, despite growing complaints about booth-capturing, is one such example; disaster management is another. Such instances point to the fact that, if a clear-cut objective is given and intervention (except orders through the direct line of command) is absent, the administrative machinery can still deliver the goods. But a vast proportion of the normal work of the administration does not deal with such well-defined and specific tasks. Public bureaucracy, by definition, must develop the general capacity to deliver the goods. Such capacity should not be dependent upon the nature of the task that the bureaucracy is called upon to perform.

There are of course constitutional and sometimes moral limits to the nature of the tasks that an administration can be called upon to handle. But within these limits, a spirit of neutrality must be cultivated. The Indian bureaucracy has been considerably weakened in this respect. It is doubtful whether the bureaucracy today can be regarded as an instrument of change. Its composition reflects many of the contradictions inherent in the society. In the implementation of any programme of change, the conflicts that may arise in the society at large are likely to be replicated within the microcosm of the bureaucracy, thereby affecting its efficiency.

Sometimes, however, the class heterogeneity of the bureaucracy and the class coalition within the political executive reinforce each other. In the case of a programme such as Land Reform, in which the ruling coalition itself is unable to resolve its inner contradictions, contradictory signals are sent through legislative measures and then through administrative implementation. The former are radical in content but the latter is crippled by confusion and prevarication. It may be genuine confusion arising out of the mixed character of the bureaucracy, or it may be confusion engineered by certain elements in the ruling coalition acting in collusion with similar elements in the

heterogeneous bureaucracy. If, however, a political executive is elected to power which follows objectives, its programmes may be obstructed by intra-bureaucracy conflicts. The communist parties have not found the bureaucracy an easy instrument for the pursuit of class-orientated objectives. A party such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is also likely to encounter similar difficulties.

On the other hand an interesting experiment has been launched recently in the sphere of literacy. Literacy programmes are being implemented under the overall guidance of the District Collector; but the key staff are selected from among the officials on the basis of aptitude and willingness to carry out the work. Literacy programmes have the advantage of not provoking political resistance. The impression given is that the staff on these programmes fall into three broad categories—nearly 50 per cent are enthusiastic about the programme; nearly 25 per cent are in it merely for the sake of duty; and the remainder bear an attitude of sullen and barely concealed resistance.

The general attitudes prevailing within the bureaucracy may well follow a similar pattern. Many have arisen over a long period of more or less one-party rule. The bureaucracy has been exposed to the dynamics of genuine political plurality at the Centre only during the last few years. In certain States, however, such a development has taken place over a longer period. These changes may well result in a renewed appreciation of the need to restore the neutrality of the civil services. Meanwhile the way forward seems to point to the maintenance of a distinction between programmes with a social content and activities basic to an administration and mostly of a regulatory nature. The bureaucracy is still an instrument uniquely suited to discharging the latter type of functions, provided the damage to its morale and efficiency is repaired.

The other types of programme, with a high social content, may be better implemented by political executives down the line. This would require a strengthening of local bodies (i.e. Panchayati Raj institutions), which should be given responsibility for the implementation of such programmes. They would be better fitted to take the kind of decisions that would be required in respect of value-loaded social programmes because they can reap political dividends through success or pay a political price through failure. That this point is widely appreciated is evident from the move to amend the Constitution in order to provide for such institutions. However, it is not yet sufficiently appreciated that, as a consequence of such a development, conflicts in the past between the political executive and the bureaucracy will now surface as contradictions between different levels of political executives. For thirty years, the main contradiction in the

Panchayati Raj was between the officials and non-officials. Today, it would appear that the main contradiction in this area is between the elected members of higher and lower level bodies. This has had an unexpected effect on the bureaucracy.

At the time of Independence, the civil services of the local bodies consisted of their own employees (with the exception of Executive Officers). One of the administrative features of the post-Independence developments has been to convert all these services into government services (on the persistent demand of employees), by a process of 'provincialization'. As a result, the formal horizontal links between the Panchayati Raj institutions and their own civil services have become weak. This has made intervention by the State government in the functioning of such institutions, through the control that they can exercise over their civil services, more frequent. Simultaneously, however, Panchayati Raj has also increased the informal horizontal links between civil servants and politicians. This has resulted, on the one hand, in an increase in opportunities for political intervention at all levels and, on the other, in greater politicization of the civil services (Table 6.1).

A reversal of the process of vertical integration of the services that has been under way since Independence is, therefore, necessary, not only for statutory devolution to work effectively but also to remove confusion in the lines of administrative control. However, given current political realities and the strength of unionization of the civil services, it is doubtful whether any such process can even be initiated, let alone succeed. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, if what one is looking for is an instrument of social change, the bureaucracy is hardly the appropriate vehicle. One ought to look to political institutions such as the Panchayati Raj, on the one hand, and political cadres, on the other, which at the present time exist only in the communist parties and the BJP.

NOTE

The comments and observations made in this chapter are based mainly—but not entirely—on the author's experience of administration in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, some qualifications in regard to their general applicability are necessary.

The stamp of the British period has long remained on Indian administration, although it is slowly fading. Colonial administration made a basic distinction between the areas in eastern India which were brought under Permanent Settlement and the rest of the country where the Ryotwari Settlement was imposed. Even today, Permanent Settlement can still explain certain features of the social and agrarian situation in eastern India.

British administration had distinct features in the Madras Presidency (based

in Fort St. George), the Bombay Presidency, the Bengal Presidency, and adjoining territories (under the aegis of Fort William), and the north Indian Hindi heartland and Frontier States, the Indian parts of which are now represented by Punjab and Haryana.

The present observations and comments would broadly apply to the States in southern India and western India (what used to be the Madras and Bombay Presidencies).

However, in southern India, conditions in Kerala have a distinctive quality:

1. There is a high literacy rate, particularly among women, with attendant impact on the social structure;
2. the Muslim and Christian communities are characterized by social and cultural features which differ from those of the two communities elsewhere in India (this is accompanied by Kerala's political distinctiveness);
3. there is a strong communist movement in the State; and
4. the social structure of Kerala, unlike other States, is not village-based.

Conditions in the State of Tamil Nadu have also diverged considerably from the initial pattern common to the Presidency of Madras as a whole, mostly because of the influence of the Dravidian political movement and the long and continuous control of the State by parties that have emerged from that movement.

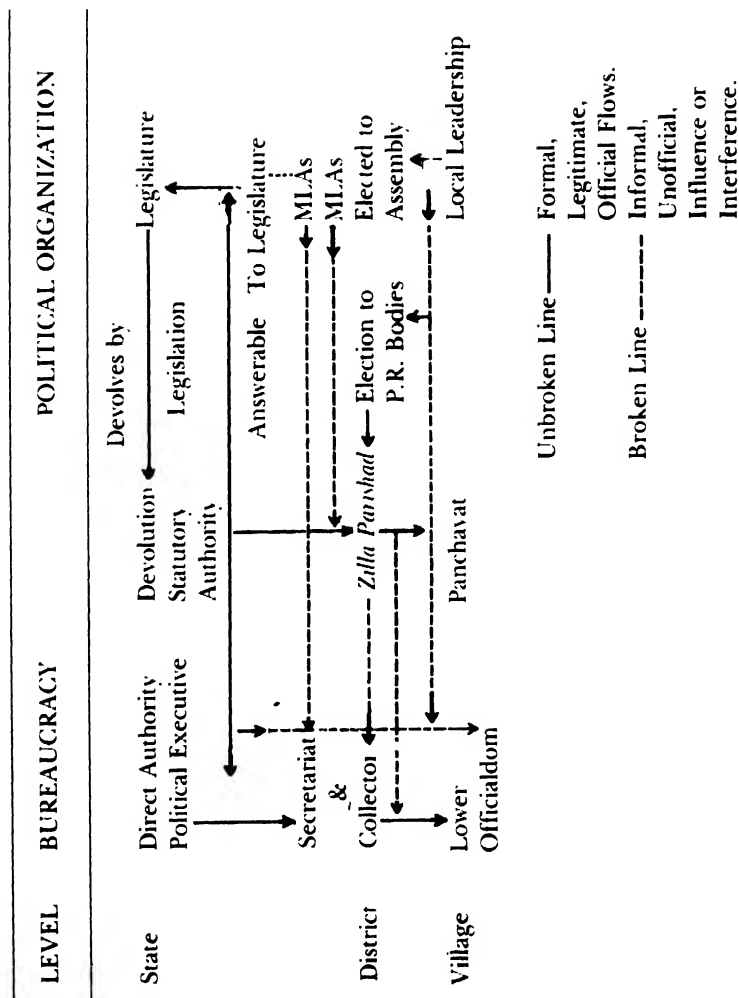
With these qualifications it can be said that conditions are comparable within these two regions and therefore the observations contained in this chapter are broadly applicable to both. The conditions prevailing in the Hindi region and the eastern States have always differed from those in the south and the west, and therefore, some at least of the observations made here are not applicable to those States.

The observations in this chapter may well apply to States in which the Congress party has enjoyed long and uninterrupted stints in power, with the exception of States in which cadre parties such as the CPI, CPI(M), and BJP have displaced it from power.

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Table 6.1



Flawed Paradigms: Some • 7 'Western' Representations of Indian Politics

SUBRATA MITRA

The problem stated

The major thrust of contemporary research on social and political change is marked by a growing scepticism of the cultural assumptions on which the earlier models of development, economic growth, and modernization were based. The shift in emphasis is evident in the contrast between the positions taken by some of the leading scholars of development during the halcyon years of post-war modernization with their subsequent 'rethinking' (Apter, 1971, 1987; Kothari, 1970, 1988; Long, 1977, 1989). As the assumption of the nineteenth century European thinkers about the eventual spread of 'universal' rationality has come under critical examination, the demand has grown for the creation of 'theoretical frameworks that combine a demystified, rationalist world-view with an understanding of the phenomenology in societies where the gods have not yet died' (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987: 742). The debate, which has moved

beyond the narrowly political, now affects the broader issues of identity and the high politics of the state. The new interest in endogenous values, identity, and culture closely parallel developments in the real world of politics where the appeal of ethnicity and religion have overtaken the post-war emphasis on economic development and class conflict as the dominant modes of political perception. This uncertainty of the terms of discourse is the predominant theme of Indian politics in the latter half of the brief post-independence phase as compared to the overall stability of the first two decades following the end of British colonial rule.

The wider philosophical interest in the terms of political discourse is also reflected in the methodology of social research. Few would agree today with the contentions of the behaviouralists of the '50s and '60s, inspired by the early positivists, about the possibility of a direct link with reality through the knowledge of the relevant facts, untainted by the values of the observer. Reaction against this form of barefoot empiricism, which had led briefly to the search for paradigms¹ of knowledge that are universalist (in the sense that a particular social situation is considered potentially identifiable within a universal *problématique*), have resulted in a further reaction in the form of various shades of relativism where a particular social situation is considered *sui generis*, understandable only in its own terms. The objective of this chapter is to state the case for research into the terms of political discourse as a necessary first step for theoretical knowledge of the empirical reality. It seeks to achieve this objective by illustrating the *impasse* in current theoretical knowledge of Indian politics through an analysis of paradigms of politics that are derivative in the sense that

¹ Despite its popularity, the concept of paradigm is used rather loosely. In her study of Kuhn (1962), Masterman (1970) identifies at least 21 different definitions of a scientific paradigm of which the following two are of particular interest. First, a paradigm is 'a whole tradition and, in some sense, a model' (Masterman, 1970: 62). This corresponds to the following in Kuhn:

...some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples of which include law, theory, applications and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particularly coherent traditions of scientific research. These are the traditions which the historian describes under such rubrics as 'Ptolemaic astronomy' (or, Copernican), 'Aristotelian dynamics' (or, Newtonian), 'corpuscular optics' (or, wave optics), and so on. The study of paradigms, including many that are far more specialized than those named illustratively above, is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community in which he practises. [Kuhn, 1962: 10–11.]

The second definition of a paradigm is 'an organizing principle which can govern perception itself' (Masterman, 1970: 62).

To cite Kuhn (1962: 112) again,

Surveying the rich experimental literature from which these examples are drawn makes one suspect that something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself.

their key concepts are the product of social and political experience extrinsic to the reality that they intend to describe.

Admittedly, most scholars engaged in empirical research would rather 'get on with it' than agonize over a selfconscious and seemingly unrewarding analysis of the terms of their discourse. For Western political scientists, engaged in the study of their own societies, this is a relatively less serious problem because both⁴ their political universe and the conceptual tools with which they approach it have in most cases shared a continuous evolution.² The academic understanding of Indian politics, for reasons to be explained later in this chapter, does not enjoy this deep empathy of the objectives and modes of enquiry. The result is an occasional lack of synchronization between the researcher and the basic data of Indian politics, a problem shared by Western methods drawn from Western paradigms.³

A growing rift between a society and its intellectuals, and the absence of institutions which provide the context in which ideas and experience can transform one another in a continuum, is the recipe for a serious epistemological and political crisis. The implications of this would be familiar to those who acquired their knowledge of Indian politics during the early decades of the republic when universal adult franchise and competitive elections were introduced with much euphoria; and, who now look askance at rising violence and the plethora of the new vocabulary of political discourse in India today.⁴ The difficulty of explaining substantive political problems is further compounded by a terminological confusion.

² Though the problem of terminological confusion is rather severe in post-colonial societies, even stable European democracies are not entirely immune from them. Thus, for example, in Britain, the concept of 'Whitehall' denotes a physical concentration of government ministries and civil servants, whereas they are *now* increasingly located elsewhere (Norton, 1991: 421). Also, the battle over the alternate agendas may be carried on through alternative terms; hence the interchangeability and the coexistence of the 'community charge' and the 'poll tax'.

³ Morris-Jones (1963) had first given a formal recognition to this problem by stipulating the modern, traditional, and the saintly as three 'idioms' of Indian politics.

⁴ In the epilogue to the new edition of *The Government and Politics of India*, Morris-Jones talks about a major change in the tone and content of Indian politics during the last two decades. The 'peaceful interpenetration of tradition and modernity' which characterized the first two decades after Independence has given way to a political context that is much more violent. The political landscape is increasingly taken over by local protest movements, even internal war. The loss of coherence and internal vitality that has affected the party system which had functioned remarkably well as an intermediary between the state and society, has grave implications for the political system as a whole.

This is the basic loss suffered by the political system in the last two decades; it is this loss which has largely removed the nation-wide stabilising element, without whose management capacity to contain particularist thrusts the system continually falls apart, with a centre which does not effectively hold [Morris-Jones, 1987: 266].

Running in parallel to such official and established concepts as democracy, participation and development are such unofficial concepts of indeterminate legality as *gherao*, *dharna*, boycott, *rasta roko*, *jail bharo*. Larger structural changes within Indian society have produced these new concepts of resistance to the authority of the state and the encroachment by the market on the life-styles and traditional means of livelihood of victims of rapid change. In their counter-strategy to neutralize these terms of struggle, both the state and the market have devised new concepts such as *loan melas* and *garibi hatao*, further enriching the vocabulary of Indian politics.⁵ This extraordinary range and richness of the conceptual and empirical material does not however appear to have affected the conceptual framework with which one seeks to understand it.

One explanation for this relative lack of synchronization can be found in the 'derivative' nature of Indian political science and its relatively narrow institutional focus.⁶ Those with longer memories will remember a failure of a similar scale on the part of the social sciences during the freedom struggle when millions were moved by Swaraj and Swadeshi while the political scientist was restricted to the narrow empirical range of British constitutionalism applied to India, or, to the ethereal spheres of philosophical speculation. Indian reactions against this conceptual inadequacy have been articulated in terms of the call for a rejection of the universal categories and a return to authentic endogenous categories, a solution which is not without

⁵ Thus, Sathyamurthy (1989: 3) suggests:

At the same time, a large number of economic and sociological terms are used to describe aspects of the political process which pertain to the subterranean reaches of politics rather than strictly to the sphere of formal institutional mechanisms (e.g., *dalal*, *mamul*, Permit-Quota-Licence-Raj in discussions of corruption; *loan melas* in discussions of partisan favours in the economic sphere; and *chacha*, *dada*, *mastaan*, *Aayaa Ram Gayaa Ram* and *Garibi Hatao* in discussions about the manipulations of political and economic processes). These represent only a thin cross-section of the enormous range of concepts of differing vitality and import that have arisen in discussions of Indian politics.

⁶ For comments on the 'derivative' discourse on politics in India, see Sathyamurthy (1989: 5). Commenting on the philosophical origins of Western scholarship on South Asia, he suggests:

Weber's work was used as the intellectual inspiration for functionalist and positivist sociology in post-war America, mainly by such scholars as Parsons and Shils and Merton and their students. Behaviourist, positivist and functionalist approaches to the study of society went hand in hand in the generation of 'comparative' studies purporting to provide typologies of different social and political systems based on common criteria ... Over the years, the two broad perspectives—Marxist and Weberian, interpenetrated to varying degrees in the approaches adopted by social science researchers, although this may have led to a certain degree of eclecticism rather than to attempts at generating a third general alternative approach. [Sathyamurthy, 1987: 463]

problems of its own.⁷ The importance of the underlying problem can be seen from the debate that has surfaced intermittently in national as well as international fora, articulated mostly but not exclusively by students of sociology (Bailey, 1957) and political science (Mehta, 1987; Sathyamurthy, 1971, 1987), and in the more specific context of the historiography of colonial rule in British India (Guha, 1983; Hardiman, 1987).

Two epistemological puzzles that arise out of this crisis are of interest to us. In the first place, how meaningful are the terms of academic discourse such as democracy and secularism to society at large? In the second place, to what extent is it possible to map into the categories of terms of academic discourse that have arisen from political practice such as *gherao*, *dharna*, boycott, *chamcha*, *julam shahi* without a significant loss of meaning? This chapter attempts to approach this larger debate through an analysis of Western scholarship on Indian politics. While it specifically focuses on the literature which has its origins in the intellectual community in North America, Britain, and the European continent, the larger implications that the essay seeks to draw are also applicable to Indian academics who have based their work on the methods and substantive conclusions of Western scholars. The intention behind the survey of this literature is not to evaluate critically their substantive findings as such, but rather to identify the key concepts with which the Western academic community has sought to represent the Indian reality, to examine their internal variation and differentiation, and to explore the grounds of commensurability.

Terms of political discourse as a problem in the sociology of knowledge

Understanding the basic terms of reference is an inevitable first step towards a systematic inquiry into any society. These key concepts

⁷ Though the language is extreme and rather deliberately provocative, Naipaul's comments on the perils of 'endogenous' models are not without justification.

... independent India, with its five-year plans, its industrialization, its practice of democracy, has invested in change. There always was a contradiction between the archaism of national pride and the promise of the new; and the contradiction has at last cracked the civilization open. The turbulence in India this time hasn't come from foreign invasion or conquest; it has been generated from within. India cannot respond in her old way, by a further retreat into archaism. Her borrowed institutions have worked like borrowed institutions; but archaic India can provide no substitutes for press, parliament, and courts. The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead. [Naipaul, 1977: 18.]

however do not appear as individual entities. Rather, they are present as an ensemble, an ordered framework of cognitive categories that link the subjective life-worlds of actors with the inter-subjective space within which they are located. These categories are the outcome of the social system and cultural beliefs. They affect and are affected by the historical conjuncture in which the society is placed. As a result, the terms of political discourse are constantly in a state of relative flux, with new concepts being added to the existing list, peripheral concepts moving to the core and some concepts dropping out altogether. Thus, today, a student of Soviet politics must necessarily have among his/her terms of reference the key concepts of revolution, party, and bureaucracy. But, whereas a few years ago (s)he could conceivably have done without *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the situation today would make their inclusion obligatory.

The Soviet example further illustrates a general characteristic of the terms of political discourse. Rather than being neutral or descriptive categories, they are very much a part of the political process, involved in the intricacies of politics either as instruments of the legitimation of power or as forms of resistance. A taxonomist, engaged in the task of identifying the most important terms of discourse in a society, would therefore come across the problem of having to decide which concepts are real, in the sense of representing a body of sensation as distinct from those that are purely literary constructs, representing nothing other than the personal opinion of their author.

At its origin, the concept of Pakistan represented nothing other than the wishes of some Muslim students from the Indian subcontinent at Cambridge for a Muslim homeland, and the demand for *Swaraj* was resisted by the colonial rulers almost to the very end as a minority demand by a handful of scheming, upper caste Hindu politicians operating within the Congress party. In each case, a historical threshold was reached at which it became clear to all the protagonists involved that Pakistan and *Swaraj* were no mere verbiage but authentic terms of power and discourse in subcontinental politics, representing the shared experience of substantial numbers of people.

The basic problem of the sociology of knowledge as applied to politics has been expressed in terms of the Mannheim paradox, which suggests that social and political thought are necessarily affected by the life situation of the actor. Depending on the location of the actor in the social distribution of power, in any given society, therefore, one will always find at least two strands of concepts—ideology, which lends legitimacy to the existing structure of power, and utopia, which challenges it.⁸ However, compared to that of societies which have had

⁸ See Geertz (1964) for a discussion of the Mannheim paradox.

a continuous political evolution, the epistemological problems of the sociology of knowledge in post-colonial societies are more complex.

Having lost their political autonomy to a foreign power, these societies have also undergone at least a temporary loss of ability to generate intellectual constructs with which to understand their own situation; a legacy which in many cases continues to influence their political discourse even after the achievement of political independence.⁹ As a prototype exemplar of this category, India offers a bewildering array of terms, ranging from those drawn from one or other variety of universal terms to those at least seemingly unique to India and in that sense endogenous. Not only do they contribute to the complexity of the political reality (for the terms of reference themselves are very much the stuff of politics), their unexplored incommensurability inhibits the possibility of a dialogue and in that sense, their presence on the scene becomes an obstacle to understanding rather than a tool for the promotion of critical social knowledge. The result of this terminological confusion is a 'dialogue of the deaf' which plagues the search for theoretical knowledge of Indian politics.¹⁰

A classificatory scheme of Western perceptions of politics in India

'The attempt to classify the vast body of writings on state and society in India, originating primarily from Europe and America, is likely to encounter at least three sets of conceptual problems. In the first place, the authors themselves are likely to take exception to the qualifier 'Western' because their writings are not intended to be 'Western' and many would go to great lengths to demonstrate their 'Indian' credentials and the selfconscious attempt to present their findings using what they consider to be 'Indian' categories.¹¹ This includes authors whose intention is to engage in a 'modern' discourse, though their terminology may sometimes be drawn from the cultural presuppositions of European societies. Those who wish to classify this body of

⁹ Guha refers to this as cognitive failure on the part of the state, which prevents it from recognizing acts of collective protest by their nature and records them merely as criminal acts (Sathyamurthy, 1990: 115).

¹⁰ Saberwal (1986, 4) refers to this as 'social blanks'.

The maintaining and the renewing of a megasociety calls for a range of institutional capabilities whose weakness or absence among Indians I shall call 'social blanks'. I shall suggest that these social blanks may account for India's difficulties with the task that history has set it.

¹¹ Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Rudolph, for example, have formulated the key concept of family-based agrarian capitalism as 'bullock capitalism'.

writing as 'Western' will therefore have to present their claim as an assertion, to be established on the basis of evidence.

The second problem arises out of the difficulty presented by the internal heterogeneity of this vast body of literary output. Any attempt to put it in terms of neat categories is likely to violate the basic objective of a classificatory exercise, which is, to minimize the diversity *within* categories and maximize the diversity *among* categories, thus maintaining a balance between the number and relative strength of categories. An additional difficulty here is that most authors meant to be put into categories not of their own making are, in fact, responding to *problematiques* of their own and could conceivably question the legitimacy of any attempt to 'impose' categories on them.

The third difficulty arises out of the very nature of classificatory exercises as an attempt to freeze what is essentially a dynamic flow of knowledge about reality. Authors shift their positions in line with their changing perception of reality. How legitimate is it then to pin down the past position of an author as most representative of his/her intellectual perception of India? Further, does the question of the change of position over time itself not open up an interesting problem in the sociology of knowledge?

In an attempt to justify the classificatory scheme presented here, let me start by addressing the third difficulty first. By the very nature of his/her craft, an author is the prisoner of the written word. In so far as s/he questions his/her past findings, the historian of ideas is perfectly entitled to use his/her (auto)critique as legitimate material to be used in the questioning of the paradigm which provided the intellectual framework of those findings. In the same vein, the new findings of an established author can be used to give legitimacy to a new paradigm struggling to establish itself as a more comprehensive and more satisfactory solution to the problems which gave rise to the now defunct paradigm in the first place. With this caveat, then, one need only add that the classificatory scheme will need to be evaluated by the reader on the basis of the quality of evidence it presents. It is essential, therefore, to examine the theoretical parameters on which it is based in the first place.

Four parameters underlie the classificatory scheme suggested here. The first is the social vision, the desired shape of the future which constitutes the objective of social transformation. The preferred values are to be realized through a set of instrumental values. These, which constitute the other three parameters, specify the nature of the state structure and society, as they occur at the start of play, and the institutional process that is intended to suitably transform them for the realization of the social vision. Using these criteria, the body of writings can be grouped into three broad streams, namely, developmental, functional, and revolutionary. The positions they adopt on the key parameters are indicated in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1

Internal Structure of Competing Paradigms: A Classificatory Scheme

<i>paradigms</i>	<i>Perception of key parameters</i>		
	<i>state</i>	<i>society</i>	<i>institutional process</i>
– developmental	hegemonic leader	object of transformation	bureaucracy, rational planning
– functional	non-exclusive initiator	object and initiator of transformation	interpenetration, mutual accommodation of state/ social system
– revolutionary	epiphenomenon/ source of opposition	epiphenomenon/ source of resistance	class struggle/ revolutionary movement

The developmental paradigm

In the opening lines of his *Politics of Modernization*, Apter speaks of the myth of Sisyphus as the *zeitgeist*, the intellectual and moral *problématique* that best sums up the spirit of our times.

Camus makes Sisyphus his hero. Sisyphus, returning again and again to roll his rock up the hill, may appear absurd. Yet on each occasion he is happy. How odd that seems! And how like our own times. The work of modernization is the burden of this age. It is our rock. It is an objective that is not confined to a single place or region, to a particular country or class, or to a privileged group of people. Modernization, and the desire for it, reaches around the world. No matter how difficult the labour, or even, at times how fruitless, the rock is shouldered once again, eagerly and with hope. Perhaps it is the element of hope that allows Camus to conclude his essay on the Greek myth with the words, 'One must imagine Sisyphus happy'. [Apter, 1965: 1.]

Basic to this approach is a dichotomous view of the universe. On one side is to be found the world of tradition, woven together in the intricate web of reciprocal obligation into an organic community, where life is ascription-oriented, particularistic, and functionally diffuse. On the other side is the brave new world of functionally specific, universalistic, achievement-oriented society. The movement

from one pole to the other is both a historical process and a moral imperative.

Modernisation is a special kind of hope. Embodied within are all the past revolutions of history and all the supreme human desires. The modernisation revolution is epic in its scale and moral in its significance. [Apter 1965: 1.]

The process is part of the product.

The developmental paradigm which aims to achieve modernization for traditional societies involves not only a change in psychological attitudes and the structure of social organization, but implies also a radical change in the political process and economic organization of society. Rapid economic growth, to be followed by political participation, are related concepts that provide the necessary linkage between the largely sociological writings on modernization and the authors who address themselves essentially to development.

During the post-war period, it is the writings of Rostow that have been identified with the idea of economic growth as representing the quintessence of development. In the somewhat sparsely populated world of development 'theories', which have achieved broad acceptance by the non-economists, Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* (1971) must certainly constitute an ideal exemplar. For evidence of acceptance of this framework, one needs only to consider such concepts as 'economic take-off', 'sustained growth', and 'preconditions for economic development', among others, which have now found their way into the everyday language of planners, captains of industry, as well as the taxpayer. In this much publicized work, Rostow defines the sweep of modern history as a set of stages of growth essential for the process of transformation that a traditional society undergoes in order to reach modernity.

Though it is presented 'only as 'an economic historian's way of generalizing', as one proceeds through the great fivefold scheme of the stages of growth through traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, take-off to sustained growth, drive to maturity and, eventually, the age of high mass consumption, it gradually becomes clear that the formulations add up to more than mere description of a historical sequence. For, what is being suggested here is not only the historical sequence of past events, but a developmental scheme with universal spatio-temporal dimensions. To generate the necessary momentum for this analytical descriptive scheme that alone can impart to it the character of the 'sweep to modern history', and thus reinforce its claim to be cross-culturally valid, Rostow identifies in the culture and social and political structure of societies that are fairly advanced in the scheme of the stages of growth, as well as those that

are still groping their way towards it, certain forces that possess qualities akin to the forces that drive human beings towards a predetermined goal.

This goal, as indicated in the scheme, is the attainment of mastery over one's environment which, besides the immediate natural surroundings, eventually comes to include other people and also their natural surroundings. Political power in the hands of modernizers, with the state serving as the catalytic agent, are among the chief means towards the attainment of this goal. The modernizing goal is achieved through the process of nation-building and economic growth, both of which involve the transformation of the production system towards greater productivity. These processes are complemented by the diffusion of entrepreneurial spirit and socio-cultural attributes collectively referred to as modernization.¹²

Thus, viewed from the perspective of the developmental paradigm, political power in the hands of a modernizing élite becomes a critical 'bridge' concept that links together the international state system and the developing world, whose members would secure full membership once their élites have succeeded in the political, economic, and cultural transformation of their respective societies. It is this spirit that provides a unifying bond to such core writings on the developmental/modernization paradigm as Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), Myrdal's (three volume) *Asian Drama* (1968), as well as the influential series of volumes on Political Development brought out by the Social Science Research Council (New York).¹³ In each of these works, India played the role of a critical empirical case for the concerned scientific paradigm, both as a source of supportive evidence, as well as a target of necessary advice in the form of policy implications for countries more or less in the position of India.

Either explicitly or implicitly the vast majority of American scholars in the behavioural tradition, doing empirical work on India, placed themselves within the world-view of modernization. In a way this lead was presented by Shils (1961) and Weiner (1962, 1965, 1967, 1983) who extended the developmental paradigm to the field of electoral analysis.¹⁴ Those writing in this vein have examined the relationship between modernization and consolidation of democracy in India

¹² Rostow (1971) contains the most definitive though not exclusive statement of this position.

¹³ The reference here is to the Princeton series on political development which became a paradigmatic statement of the field in the '60s. See, in particular, Pyc and Verba (1965).

¹⁴ In a purely technical sense, Indian applications of electoral forecasts have gone beyond the predictive accuracy achieved by their original Western inventors. The reference here is to the phenomenal success of electoral forecasts on the eve of the 1989 Indian parliamentary election.

(Field, 1980), diffusion of the norms of participatory democracy, and institutionalization of political competition and bargaining (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 1986), and electoral competition and party politics (Eldersveld and Ahmed, 1978; Palmer, 1975; Weiner, 1978, 1983), modernization of religion (Smith, 1963), interest groups and pressure groups (Weiner, 1962).

The 'pattern variables' of Parsons (reminiscent in many ways of the formulation of the course of modernization by Toënnies as the transition from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*), such as ascription-achievement, particularism-universalism, diffuseness-specificity, collectivity orientation-self-orientation and affectivity-neutrality constituted the key parameters of the developmentalist paradigm. Though Parsons himself was cautious enough to admit the 'identification' of the universalistic-achievement pattern with the 'dominant American ethic',¹⁵ the same cannot be said by those who sought to apply this paradigm to India. In the brave new modern world envisioned by the developmentalists, they predicted

a future in which caste as well as other 'primordial' collectives would be superseded by individualistic modern associations [Frankel and Rao, 1989: 14].

Growing economic differentiation and urbanization, it was thought during the first decades following Independence, would lead to a decline of caste solidarity, resulting in a greater secularization of the political culture. According to Hardgrave

The differentiated political culture represents, perhaps most accurately, simply a foundation for the emergence of a political culture reflecting identities based on economic interests and growing political awareness [Hardgrave, 1969: 105].

Research on the consequences of modernization has however shown a different picture. Exposure to modern methods of communication, growing affluence, and the spread of literacy and migration to urban areas have in many cases led to the spread of Sanskrit ideas and values (Béteille, 1969). Singer (1980) has argued similarly that the spread of urbanization, literacy, education and expansion of the mass media represented a technical modernization that was exploited in order to democratize the 'Great Tradition' and make it more accessible. These anomalous aspects of modernization, marked by the spread of participation and political consciousness, have been pointed out by several authors including Madan (1987) and Nelson (1987).

The internal Emergency (1975-7) brought into focus a political ambiguity that had been implicit in the paradigm of development,

¹⁵ The point has been made in Verney (1986).

applied to Indian politics. It inverted the Indian state, rather like the Pompidou Centre in Paris, adorned by the pipes, air vents, and other internal organs that are essential to the functioning of the system. The political articulation of the authoritarian alternative and the electoral success of an unrepentant Indira Gandhi in the 1980 election instituted popular authoritarianism as a viable option within the Indian political system. The complacent optimism with which political scientists of the pre-Emergency period had conceptualized an incremental model of participation thus stood discredited.

Broad comparisons with Western democracy in this context could be misleading because, historically, mass participation in Europe had followed the achievement of rapid economic growth whereas, in India, a political decision was made at Independence to extend universal adult franchise without waiting for the extension of literacy, economic growth, or urbanization. The contradictions between democracy and secularism, on the one hand, and mass participation and order on the other hand, did not reveal themselves during the early years of Independence, thanks largely to the presence of the Indian National Congress as an intermediary that transposed itself between a traditional society and the modern state. Congress-bred nationalism was at once a global (i.e. all-India in this context) concept and a sum of parochial concepts (derived from specificities of language, religion, region, etc.). This is the theme of certain neo-functionalist writers of Indian vintage (e.g. Das Gupta, 1970).

The liminality of the internal structure of the Indian National Congress provided an effective and complex mechanism for the aggregation of the contradictions of the political universe within which it was placed. In practice, this was achieved through the successful internalization of multiple social cleavages in the form of a 'modern' parliamentary wing and a 'traditional' organizational wing. However, by the mid-'60s, this convenient structure had largely broken down, exposing in the process the intellectual limitations of the developmental paradigm. Weiner (1989: 269–70) sums up the difficulty in his concept of 'stalemated' modernization:

Since 1966, in all fields other than agriculture, India's attempts to modernize had been stalemated. Even the dramatic strides that India made in the late 1960s in agriculture had been halted ... Through 1974 and early 1975, there were reports from all over India reflecting the disarray in the economy. Six and half a million tribals in Bihar were said to be near starvation in late 1974 ... Political and social tensions were mounting ... Among both Indian and Western observers there was (and continued to be) a sense of foreboding: India could either move in the direction of a major political transformation—a political revolution, praetorian take-over, an authoritarian leadership—or, alternatively,

slide steadily into greater corruption, disorder, and some form of 'warlordism', decentralized units of authority that resist central control. Few observers saw the political structure as in a state of equilibrium.

The challenge to the authority of the modern state was articulated by precisely those groups that are normally among the beneficiaries of modernization, thus creating an anomaly for the paradigm:

In the months before the declaration of Emergency, vocal and organized opposition to the government came from the most modern (some might say, the most privileged) sector of the country—the very groups which had provided Mrs Gandhi political support in her battle for political power within the Congress party in 1969 and 1970. The Congress Working Committee, in a resolution supporting the decision of the Prime Minister to establish Emergency rule, pointed to the growth of 'organized strikes, go slow movements by government employees, and industrial employees ... student agitations and indiscipline', all urban-centred protest movements. The establishment of the Emergency brought to an end—for how long it was not certain—strikes, student demonstrations, and protest movements, while there was an immediate improvement in the performance both of the economy and the administration. But the country's long-term problems remained. [Weiner, 1989: 271–2.]

The 'long-term problems' Weiner referred to, in relation to the events of 1975–7, have grown in volume and intensity during the subsequent years. Short-lived though it was, the Emergency succeeded in giving enduring character to some of its draconian measures.¹⁶ The return to power of an unrepentant Indira Gandhi in 1980 gave political substance to institutionalized authoritarianism and opened up once again for the modernization paradigm the dilemma that Huntington had already outlined in the '60s. Support to the post-1980 state entailed intellectual approval of state-initiated acts of political repression.

The civil society had, in turn, taken to methods of coercion and collective protest to a degree where participation theory could not be explained within the paradigm of liberal democracy. There were other anomalies as well. Whereas modernization theory had confidently predicted the decline of political saliency of religion and the supersession of primordial identities by civil loyalties, the politics of the '80s and since have been, if anything, dominated by religion, communal and caste conflict, and attempts by ethnic groups to carve out political territories for exclusive dominance.

Faced with these anomalies, the current version of the moderniza-

¹⁶ I am grateful to Heather Woodley (1990) for drawing attention to specific cases of the institutionalization of the Emergency.

tion paradigm has found an explanation for India's problems in the 'theory' of deinstitutionalization and criminalization of politics, which suggests the moral case for the resurrection of the institutions of state to their original stature which they are presumed to have enjoyed during the Nehru era.¹⁷ Once again, devoid of its empirical and theoretical arguments, the latest version of the modernization paradigm can rely only on its moral core.¹⁸ Being descriptive and essentially prescriptive in nature, the deinstitutionalization thesis

does not have the requisite theoretical depth to pose the all important question of the *cause* of the structural discontinuity, the symptoms of which are being referred to as deinstitutionalization. To the extent that any attempts are made in this direction, its proponents are able to offer explanations only in terms of political styles and motives of key actors. Nor is the issue of the state's ability to regenerate itself raised with any degree of seriousness. [Mitra, 1988: 333.]

The functional paradigm

Though the most celebrated, the developmental paradigm as an all-embracing solution to the problem of modernization was not the only progeny of the European Renaissance. The Enlightenment also produced a romantic nostalgia for the past. Centuries later, one can find traces of this in the Orientalist 'constructions' of India as a mirror image of the West. Through a series of transferences and transformations, this contributed to an intellectual current that insisted on singularizing each social situation and seeking to comprehend its moral and material organization in terms of concepts and values

¹⁷ The deinstitutionalization thesis enjoys wide support among some leading students of Indian politics. See, for example, Manor (1983) Kothari (1982, 1983) offers a similar explanation in elaborating his concept of the 'criminalization of politics'

¹⁸ The moral argument comes out rather strongly in the 'explanation' of state degeneration given by Rudolph and Rudolph, for Indira Gandhi is not the only one to be singled out as morally flawed among the actors on the national scene. Janata's 'historic failure' to institute a competitive two-party system attributed chiefly to the personal antagonism between the recalcitrant Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, the ambitious *kisan* leader. However, as a corollary, great hope is placed in Rajiv Gandhi's ability to secure balance and accommodation for the regeneration of the state in India.

Since some of these points were made in Mitra (1988: 333), India witnessed a major political change through the electoral debacle of the Congress party. The remarkable point here is the variable nature of the moral evaluation of political leaders by the advocates of the deinstitutionalization thesis. Clearly, the evaluation of a particular leader is conditional upon his/her ability to live up to the expectation of the deinstitutionalization lobby and to deliver the political goods. Rajiv Gandhi's political failure made him morally indefensible. The leader who made a serious recent attempt to live up to the expectations of this 'theory' is V P Singh. See, for example, Datta-Ray (1990).

specific to it. Applied to India, this approach entailed the identification of the varna system with the localized jati as its operational category, consisting of a hierarchy of relations as the quintessential bedrock of Indian society.

The relative autonomy of politics from the social process and its ability to reformulate the rules of social transaction is the determining factor that we can use in our efforts to identify authors who can be placed within this paradigm. Though identified widely with the work of Dumont (1966), who specifies a hierarchial social structure with the abstract values of dharma at the apex as the fundamental basis of Indian society, other major conceptual contributions to this approach include Bailey's notion of the peasant society as a multiplex of relations that selectively and rationally incorporates elements of modern life (Bailey, 1970), Morris-Jones's concept of the three idioms of politics in India (Morris-Jones, 1963, 1987), and the notion of the modernity of tradition put forward by Rudolph and Rudolph (1967).

Bailey's theoretical formulations on a model of Indian politics, based as it is on excellent fieldwork, deserves careful attention. He (1970) describes the Indian political system as the aggregation of a set of interlocking and 'nested' arenas at the locality, district, and regional levels. Each arena operates according to rules specific to it, which is why there is no homogeneity across the larger political system. Therefore, issues of cross-systemic significance have to be

translated into something else at constituency level and have to be translated yet again at village level [Bailey, 1970: 232].

The translation is the act of adaptation of the general to the specific. The process of translation forms part of the transaction between arenas. Politics in this sense is a secondary activity whose sole *raison d'être* is to 'preserve' the 'way of life' of the respective arenas. If there is a functional 'bias' that characterizes the social transaction, it does not necessarily suggest that Bailey does not conceptualize the possibility of basic change. The process of change, introduced by the new political institutions, is in a sense open-ended.

If we take our stand beside the villager, every time the issues of State politics have to be translated into village idiom, then the village arenas have won a victory and vindicated their existence ... When on the other hand ... the villagers treat State politics as a system of relationships in its own right, and when village politics are unconnected with State politics, then this is a victory for representative institutions, for, to continue using metaphors, those institutions have successfully broken into the tight circle of parochial loyalties and succeeded in differentiating their kind of political interaction from social interaction. [Bailey, 1970: 234.]

While Bailey leaves open the possibility of a successful 'breakthrough'

in the direction of irreversible modernization, Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) are more fully anchored to the resilience of endogenous culture. Referring to the almost infinite ability of tradition to adapt and therefore survive, Rudolph and Rudolph had suggested in the *Modernity of Tradition* that

[i]f tradition and modernity are seen as continuous rather than separated by an abyss, if they are dialectically rather than dichotomously related, and if internal variations are attended to and taken seriously, then those sectors of traditional society that contain or express potentialities for change from dominant norms and structures become critical for understanding the nature and processes of modernization [Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967: 8].

This has drawn sharp criticism from several quarters, notably including Fox who has referred to the tautological implications of the formulation.

If aspects of the traditional survive it is because they had this potentiality; if they do not, it is because they lacked this potential ability [Fox, 1970: 26].

Rudolph and Rudolph have met this charge to some extent in their *Pursuit of Lakshmi*, where they identify the 'institutionalized patterns of authority within India's state tradition' as the key parameter that accounts for the relative autonomy and resilience of the state in India. However, the influence of functionalism where changes *within* the structure nevertheless do not lead to change *of* the structure are still evident in their conception of the state in India:

Like Hindu conceptions of the divine, the state in India is polymorphous, a creature of manifold forms and orientations. One is the third actor whose scale and power contribute to the marginality of class politics. Another is a liberal or citizens' state, a juridical body whose legislative reach is limited by a written constitution ... Still another is a capitalist state that guards the boundaries of the mixed economy by protecting the rights and promoting the interests of property in agriculture, commerce, and industry. Finally, a socialist state is concerned to use public power to eradicate poverty and privilege and tame private power. Which combination prevails in a particular historical setting is a matter for inquiry. [Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987: 400-1.]

The paradigm of revolution

A Marxist revolution whose ultimate objective is to place Prometheus in the service of the toiling masses has provided a rallying point for those dissatisfied with the inadequacies of the developmental and

functional paradigms. Such influential works as the pre-war Dutt (1940) and post-war Moore (1966), as well as more recent writers like Frankel (1978)¹⁹ and Kohli (1987) broadly share some of the humanist and politically radical sympathies embodied in the Marxist paradigm. Kohli questions the incrementalism of developmental models by referring to the unbroken exercise of power

by an alliance of a nationalist political élite with entrepreneurial classes, capable of simulating economic growth [Kohli, 1987: 8],

placed within a

state supported capitalist economy [Kohli, 1987: 80].

Those without property or other means of contributing to the process of production—which presumably provides the bonding principle for the rather different groups collectively referred to as India's ruling classes—can expect very little out of the political system. Mass poverty in India is therefore neither an accidental nor an incidental feature of the Indian political system, but its logical concomitant.

The failure to mitigate even the worst of India's poverty is a consequence of the institutionalized patterns of dominance within India [Kohli, 1987: 8].

These themes find further reinforcement in Byres (1988), Harriss (1982), and a wide variety of writers both within and outside India.

Without necessarily going into the relative merits of these arguments, it is important here to point out the limited mass appeal of Marxist terms of discourse within Indian politics where religion, region, caste, and (as the last two general elections demonstrate) participation has increasingly appeared as a powerful factor. Though the Communist Party of India was prevented from operating in the open by colonial rulers during most of the intervening period between its establishment during the early '20s and Independence, except during certain intervals (especially the Telangana insurrection and the India–China war and its aftermath), the Party has had full freedom to communicate its views to the people. However, its appeal has remained confined to its regional bases, explicable more in terms of its identification with regional sentiments rather than the evocation of its universal message. Moore, while explaining the persistence of

¹⁹ In her recent work Frankel has significantly changed her methodological stance. Instead of suggesting that the momentum for change could come only from a movement from below, she suggests the interaction between the state and society as a more feasible source of radical change in India. See Frankel and Rao (1989, 1990).

mass poverty, nevertheless concedes the limited appeal of Marxist categories in the Indian situation.

Gandhi provided a link between powerful sections of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry through the doctrine of non-violence, trusteeship, and the glorification of the Indian village community. For this and other reasons, the nationalist movement did not take a revolutionary form, though civil disobedience forced the withdrawal of a weakened British empire. The outcome of these forces was indeed political democracy, but a democracy that has not done a great deal toward modernizing India's social structure. Hence famine still lurks in the background. [Moore, 1967: 316.]

Two interesting questions suggest themselves here. They refer respectively to Marxist works on politics in India written by practitioners of Marxism and academic contributions inspired by Marxism on society, state, and culture in India. How and to what extent have communist parties captured the contradiction between ideas (Marxist conceptual categories) and experience (mass political behaviour in India)? To what extent has Marxist theory captured this quintessentially Indian *problématique*? Other contributors (Alam; and Wilson) to this volume have considered at length the historical dimensions of the former question. I shall confine my comments only to two observations.

In the first place, when faced with the conflict between established categories and divergent behaviour, the typical reaction of the communist movement has been to split in a manner that temporarily restored the synchronization of ideas and experience within the respective fragments. The dynamics of post-Independence politics has thus seen the fragmentation of the communist movement (India must hold a record of sorts on this account) rather than in devising institutions within which ideas and experience could influence each other to mutual benefit. To the extent that this dialectic has indeed taken place, the direction has been quite perverse, for, instead of the conceptualization of reality being enriched by the perception of it, political differences have been merely rationalized through thinly disguised 'theoretical' explanations.²⁰

The wide-ranging nature of Marxist scholarship on the state and political discourse can be seen in the impact it has exercised on other aspects of Indian life. An impressive range of contributions, originally inspired by Guha, but which has increasingly been recognized as a distinct mode of analysis under the collective appellation of the 'Subaltern' school, has sought to overcome, in a more promising way,

²⁰ ...there was a tendency for these [CPI(M)] writers to modify the terms, if not the content, of their work, in order to make it consistent with existing party positions [Wilson in this volume].

some of the limitations of what we have earlier referred to as Marxist political formulations on the state in India. These writers have attempted to incorporate endogenous political idioms within the Marxist paradigm in their efforts to locate collective protest in India within a revolutionary agenda.²¹

Rooted in a Marxist understanding of political change and evolution, but reinforced nevertheless 'with a wealth of empirical material and hard evidence', and drawing freely on a range of social sciences, Guha has succeeded in placing the specific historical conjuncture of colonial rule within a broader framework, in a manner where the categories of the actor and her/his political experience converge (Sathyamurthy, 1990). As a result, subaltern research has extended the scope of social research into previously unexplored areas. However, having unleashed a rich stock of evidence at the level of individual consciousness, subaltern historiography demonstrates a tendency to slip back into orthodox Marxist political formulations when it seeks to place it within the context of macro-theory. The difficulty arises when attempts are made to impart a dynamic aspect to the analysis of the specific situation, almost to the extent that the description of the political negotiations and transactions that mark the post-insurrectionary situation is not possible without re-introducing the dreaded concept of false consciousness all over again.²²

Conclusion

This brief and synoptic survey of the leading paradigms of discourse on Indian politics demonstrates two sets of difficulties. The first refers to those that characterize the normal functioning of a paradigm which serves to suggest an agenda, identify a community of scientists, specifies the puzzles, and lays down the criteria of acceptable rules of evidence. In the case of each of the paradigms examined here, we have identified its key concepts and parameters, its major puzzles and the degree of success it may have achieved in suggesting solutions to them. The inability of each of these 'flawed' paradigms to give a satisfactory account of reality, it is suggested here, is explained by the fact that the root concepts around which they are organized are not germane to the experience that comes under their domain.

A second and more intractable difficulty arises out of the incom-

²¹ The findings of the Subaltern school, in six volumes under Guha's general editorship, are published by Oxford University Press. For critical comments on their methodology, see Sathyamurthy (1990). A seventh volume has recently (1992) been added.

²² Thus, Hardiman (1987) concludes his analysis by attributing a consciously anti-bourgeois stance to the Adivasi uprising described in his work.

mensurability of these paradigms. The two sets of problems operate in a cumulative fashion with the consequence that there does not exist a comprehensive discourse on the Indian state within which India's cultural perception of the self could also be specified in terms of the political discourse of change. The result is a crisis in our knowledge of politics in India where the impressive expansion of social scientific knowledge appears only to parallel a growing sense of uncertainty about the cultural roots and political basis of the very knowledge itself.

Is it, however, the unique privilege of only the students of Indian politics to agonize eternally over the terms of discourse while their colleagues in economics make rapid strides with their accumulation of knowledge? One cannot avoid a degree of envy at the impressive growth of economic statistics and abstractions, and the confidence with which economists go about their job even when their predictions are not always necessarily the most accurate. In suggesting the terms of discourse as the most salient element of the research agenda on Indian politics, are we perhaps leading our discipline only into an intellectual *cul de sac*, a latter day Mannheim paradox?

While this scepticism about the soundness of our project is justified, the Indian political universe abounds in enough evidence to justify questions about the analytical models with which we perceive reality. The most interesting and confounding piece of evidence is to be found in the very resilience of the state itself. In the first place, despite the dire predictions of internal war, balkanization and decay, it survived and even expanded through the difficult years of the '60s. The internal collapse of the state in the '70s came as yet another puzzle. The third set of puzzles is about the regeneration of the state in response to the forces present within its structure. Seen from the perspective of each of the three paradigms, the resilience of the state in India represents not only a paradox but also an anomaly. Its reassuring presence barely conceals the essential unpredictability of its continued existence.

One would wish to go the full length of the argument and take the charge of Naipaul (1977) at its most serious. At the height of the 1975–7 Emergency, he wrote:

With the dismantling, during the Emergency, of its borrowed or inherited institutions, and with no foreign conqueror now to impose a new order, India for the first time for centuries is left alone with the blankness of its decayed civilization. The freedoms that came to independent India with the institutions it gave itself were alien freedoms, better suited to another civilization; in India they remained separate from the internal organization of the country, its beliefs and antique restrictions ... The dismantled institutions—of law and press and

parliament—cannot simply be put together again; it has been demonstrated that freedom is not an absolute in independent India ... With or without Mrs Gandhi, independent India—with institutions of government opposed to its social organization, with problems of poverty that every Indian feels in his bones to be beyond solution—would have arrived at a state of emergency.

Naipaul's explanation is even less optimistic:

... the Emergency, even with Mrs Gandhi's authority, is only a staying action. However it is resolved, India will at the end be face to face with its own emptiness, the inadequacy of an old civilization which is cherished because it is all men have but which no longer answer their needs. India is without an ideology—and that was the failure of Gandhi and India together. Its people have no idea of the state, and none of the attitudes that go with such an idea: no historical notion of the past, no identity beyond the tenuous ecumenism of Hindu beliefs, and, in spite of the racial excesses of the British period, not even the beginnings of a racial sense. [Naipaul, 1977: 168.]

One could of course question the empirical validity of some of these possibly incautious predictions. After all, the Emergency was brought to an end through the normal political process and its worst excesses were dismantled through the due process of law. With hindsight, it is possible to argue that Naipaul was perhaps a little too pessimistic about the future and rather careless in drawing long-term implications out of a temporary aberration of the Indian political system. But then, it is important to remember that just like the cause of the imposition of the Emergency, its demise remains largely unexamined and, even before the last of the 'cleansing acts' could take effect, Indira Gandhi, the unrepentant author of the Emergency, was firmly back in the saddle, once again through the operation of the normal political process in the election of 1980. The cycle has repeated itself yet again, for on the heels of the euphoria over the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi's authoritarian techno-élitist style, political corruption and strong-arm tactics of the kind witnessed at Amethi, came the brutal and corrupt use of state power by the Janata government at Meham in the Haryana State Assembly election (1990). Are India's institutions then, as Naipaul alleges, merely a façade barely concealing a political and moral void?

Some of the basic issues involved here were already articulated at the time of the initial encounter with colonialism.

Most Hindu leaders, then, were convinced that India's salvation lay in embracing modernity. This created a problem. The institutions they wished to adopt were all products of modern European civilization with very different basis and character from their own. As they repeatedly emphasized, their civilization was plural, rural, sociocentric, spiritual,

uncentralized, based on dharma rather than law, on duties rather than rights, on groups rather than individuals, whereas modernity had the opposite orientation. This raised the crucial question as to whether and how it could be reconciled with tradition, the European institutions blended with Indian values and practices and what was to be done in the case of conflict. [Parekh, 1989: 57.]

Parekh goes on to suggest the range of responses this dilemma evoked within Indian opinion in the form of the advocates of 'modernism', 'critical modernism or syncreticism', and 'critical traditionalism'. The student of Indian politics who relies on the mainstream Western literature examined in this chapter will find little indication of an awareness of this dilemma, which, once again, goes to show the intellectual aridity of this rapidly proliferating literature.

It is possible, nevertheless, that those with some sensitivity to cultural conflict can feel the existence of this problem. That they fail to express this misgiving in terms acceptable to social scientific understanding of India can only indicate the absence of terms of political discourse that are authentic, effective, comprehensive, and largely endogenous in character. The responses of the developmental paradigm or its current version, deinstitutionalization theory, functionalism, or for that matter, revolutionary models do not quite succeed in providing a satisfactory answer to this puzzle.

One possible explanation for this intellectual shortcoming of the paradigms of politics might lie in their essential character as extensions of a 'Western' *problematique* and a paradigm with which men and women sought to order their universe in post-enlightenment Europe. The consequence is a fatal dissociation between belief and practice, categories and experience and, most alarmingly, society and its intellectuals. Institutions, which provide the political context within which the dialectical interaction of ideas and experience takes place, are under considerable and increasing strain. The ironical consequence of this confusion is the rich abundance of terms of political discourse where terms of discourse, jostling for public recognition, are engaged in competition. The exercise undertaken in this chapter will have been worth the effort if it facilitates the search for a more effective paradigm, set within terms of discourse derived from Indian political experience and articulated in endogenous political vocabulary.²¹

NOTE

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²¹ In a personal communication, Saberwal has indicated that this search would lead to a congruence between the observer's categories with the insider's 'lived-in' terms.

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Class Alliances and the • 8 Nature of Hegemony: The Post-Independence Indian State in Marxist Writing

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I should perhaps begin by explaining that the principal focus of this chapter is those Marxist analyses of the Indian state produced under the rubric of 'politics' as an academic discipline. Inevitably, this work has been influenced by developments within other disciplines, particularly economics and historiography. More importantly, academic developments in this field have been organically linked to developments within left political parties. A detailed analysis of the latter, as expressed in the 'official' literature of these parties, is beyond the scope of this chapter. But clearly, characterizations of the state cannot be seen in isolation from those which are continually emerging from, and in turn shaping, political practice.

It is partly as a result of this that Marxist analyses of the Indian state are in general free of the 'derivative' tendencies which are so marked

in non-Marxist writing on India.¹ Unlike non-Marxist political theories which depend heavily upon comparisons with pre-defined norms (such as that of the Western bourgeois-democratic nation state), Marxism provides a method of analysis—dialectical materialism—which can be applied to any set of historical conjunctures. Not all writers who regard themselves as Marxists have genuinely applied this method, and some, especially those constrained by 'party lines', have tended to lapse into an essentially formulaistic approach to Marxism.

But this does not detract from the fact that the inadequacy of European Marxist theory to answer the basic questions posed by a Marxist approach to India has forced Indian Marxists to develop new terms of reference. Thus the problems of formulaism and the constraining effects of 'orthodoxies' in Indian Marxism—where they exist—are not primarily problems of 'Eurocentrism',² nor, as I hope to demonstrate, are they problems which have proved insuperable.

The state is a central category for Marxist analysis of any social formation in which antagonistic classes have emerged. For Marx and Engels, the existence and nature of the state in a given society both resulted from and made possible the dominance of a particular class within that society. The state, wrote Engels, is

as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class [Engels, 1972: 231].

At the same time, classical Marxist theory attributed to the state a degree of 'relative autonomy': the state is a 'power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it and increasingly alienating itself from it', a power which acts to ensure that 'these antagonisms, classes with conflicting interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle' (Engels, 1972: 229). This 'placing itself above' society, which enables the state to limit and contain class struggle, implies the generation of consent (as well as the use of coercion) by the state as an important means of maintaining state power.³

This was a theme developed by later Marxist writers, notably Gramsci, whose discussion of 'hegemony' was elaborated in the context of a focus on the nature of ideology. The conception of the state as a site of struggle between different class forces was further

¹ For an analysis of 'Western' paradigms of Indian politics which explores the implications of this 'derivative' nature, see Mitra's contribution in this volume (Chapter 7).

² Yadav has claimed that for Marxists, 'understanding India was simply a matter of plotting it appropriately on the graph of *the* history. In other words, the European agenda surfaced here too' (Yadav, 1990: 18).

³ The debate concerning the extent to which the idea of 'consent' is in fact present in the writings of Marx and Engels on the state has been examined in detail in Hoffman (1984).

developed in Poulantzas's analyses of the capitalist, bourgeois, democratic state, which also emphasized the role of the state in organizing the dominant classes—and disorganizing the subordinate classes.

However, as Poulantzas himself noted, there can be no 'general theory' of the state, since

neither the concept of the economy nor that of the state can have the same extension, field or meaning in the various modes of production [Poulantzas, 1980: 17].

And it is perhaps the differences rather than the similarities between the Indian state and the capitalist states considered by the majority of European Marxist writers which has made it a particular focus for Marxists analysing post-Independence India.

That the concept of the colonial state in India is very different from that of the metropolitan capitalist state is self-evident. Rather than emerging from contradictions within an earlier mode of production, the forces which lead to the establishment of the colonial state are primarily external to the indigenous social formation. Colonialism in India involved, on the one hand, the preservation and incorporation of major elements of the pre-colonial social formation and, on the other, a marked disjuncture with the past, in a process which has been described by Amin as the 'disarticulation' of the internal economy and the 'integration of the segments externally' into the world capitalist system (Amin, 1976).

The agent of this transformation was the colonial state. Particularly in the phase when land revenue was the primary means of surplus extraction, the state directly appropriated the surplus from the Indian agricultural sector and exported it to the metropolis for investment (part of the process of expanded reproduction which tied India into British manufacturing). And while the metropolitan capitalist state is regarded as having an essentially organizing role with regard to capital, embodying the general interests of the bourgeoisie, whose individual members are by definition divided among themselves, in the colonial context it is military and political domination—culminating in the establishment of the colonial state—which pre-dates and facilitates the penetration of the economy by metropolitan capital.¹

¹ Patnaik has described the nature of this penetration as follows:

We find that generalized commodity production was *imposed* from outside in the process of imperialist exploitation itself. India was forced to enter the network of world capitalist exchange relations ... Generalized commodity production within the specific conditions created in India by Imperialism did not in fact imply the automatic development of capitalist relations in production in agriculture. It led to an inordinate development of capital in the sphere of exchange, to a prolonged disintegration of the pre-capitalist mode without its reconstitution on a capitalist basis. [Patnaik, 1972: A-149.]

The identification of the state with this capital is thus far more explicit in the colony than in the metropolis itself.

The idea that the colonial state has a determining influence upon economic structure has been put forward by Alavi in his (itself rather problematic) definition of a 'colonial mode of production' (Alavi, 1975) and has been criticized as 'stand[ing] Marx on his head' (Banaji, 1975). Yet neither Alavi nor his critics acknowledge that this inversion may be a specifically colonial phenomenon. And paradoxically, Alavi's analysis, while insisting upon the specificity of the *mode of production* under colonialism, characterizes the *state* simply as 'bourgeois'. Some of the crucial distinctions between the colonial and the bourgeois metropolitan state have been drawn out recently by Guha (1989) in a contribution which is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. One of the central points of Guha's analysis is the predominance of coercion over consent in the constitution of dominance in colonial India. This is closely related to the characteristics of the colonial state referred to above: its genesis outside the indigenous social formation, its role of simultaneously retarding Indian economic development and integrating the country into the world economy (Guha has characterized colonialism as 'an insuperable barrier to the universalizing tendency of capital' (Guha, 1989: 228)), and its position as the primary agent of colonial surplus extraction. Coercion was present at every level of the colonial state, even within the apparatuses which are generally viewed as 'ideological' rather than 'repressive'.

For all these reasons, the experience of colonialism ensured that the characterization of the state—both colonial and post-independence—would be recognized from the outset as a vital task for Indian Marxists. However, the central and very visible role of the state continued after Independence, in a way which involved both dramatic breaks and continuities with the colonial era.

On the one hand, the Indian independence movement brought together large sections of society, with conflicting interests, against colonial rule. The movement was thus also a site of struggle between different classes for control over it; a struggle in which the growing indigenous bourgeoisie was able to establish its dominance well before Independence. This class clearly perceived the Indian state as the vehicle through which it would transform the economy and strengthen its own position within it.

On the other hand, the structure and apparatuses of the state remained largely identical with those of the colonial state which had been used to reshape the Indian social formation according to the needs of metropolitan capital. And the same alliance with the rural dominant classes which had enabled the bourgeoisie to dominate the independence movement now proved to be a major constraint upon

capitalist transformation. The state thus became the focal point for a number of different contradictions whose strength varied over time: contradictions between different sections of the dominant classes, between the interests of imperialist and indigenous capital, as well as between the producing classes and those who appropriated their surplus.

In this context it is worth noting that the relationship between Marxist theory and practice is particularly clear in India. Much of Marxist theory has been developed by left political parties and intellectuals associated with them. This has given Indian Marxist analysis a particularly strong emphasis on revolutionary strategy, and therefore the necessity of understanding the existing state. Indeed, one of the most significant factors distinguishing the theoretical positions of the major Left parties and movements in India is precisely their differing characterizations of the Indian state.

The variety of these characterizations itself reflects the complexity which has been perhaps the most obvious reason for the sustained attention given to the Indian state. Analysing the Indian state involves analysing the changing articulations between several modes of production in the process of transformation, and the shifting alliances between the various classes which emerge as dominant within these modes. The identification and characterization of these classes and alliances, and their relationship with the state and with imperialism, have been vital markers in the debate around the Indian state. And it is this theme which is the starting point for my discussion of contemporary Marxist analyses of the Indian state.

I will look at how during the '50s and '60s different interpretations of the nature of the dominant classes, and particularly the Indian bourgeoisie, crystallized, leading to the consolidation of at least three distinct characterizations of the state by the late '60s. In this context I discuss how Marxists developed a critique of the role of state intervention in what in the discourse of the state was known as 'India's socialistic pattern of development'.

Until the late '60s there was a general consensus that the Indian bourgeoisie controlled state power in some form of alliance with the dominant agrarian classes. But the debate among Marxist economists concerning the transformation of the agrarian mode of production in the context of the impact of the 'green revolution', as well as the rise to power of regionally based parties in some States led to more attention being focused on the nature of this alliance in the early '70s. The political implications of contradictions emerging between the urban bourgeoisie and a developing class of capitalist farmers were raised for the first time. However, it was not until much later that the specific

ways in which state structures both reflected and reproduced these alliances and contradictions were analysed.

It was again in response to changes which began to occur in the late '60s (in particular the split in the Congress Party in 1969 and the 'populist' stance adopted by Indira Gandhi in the early '70s), that certain Marxist writers attempted to apply the concept of 'intermediate regimes' to India. Many more however were concerned with growing repression by the state, particularly that directed at the organized urban proletariat. It was in the context of this increasing repression, which culminated in the imposition of the Emergency, that for the first time the *nature* of state power and by implication the role of ideology came under close scrutiny.

Meanwhile the contradictions between different sections of the dominant classes had become acutely visible and the possibility of their generating a 'crisis of the Indian state' became a major focus of analysis in the wake of the Emergency and the subsequent rise and fall of the Janata government. Yet neither of these interrelated trends within Marxist writing were able to provide an insight into how the articulation of different modes of production expressed itself on an ideological level, and the widespread characterization of the Indian state as a 'bourgeois state without bourgeois hegemony' essentially failed to look beyond the *form* of state power, and to reassess the use of the concept of 'hegemony' itself in the Indian context.

How far has this changed in more recent writings? I will refer to the treatment of two interlinked themes in Marxist writing on the Indian state in the '80s. These are, firstly Centre-State relations, and secondly regional and national identities within India and the discourse of post-independence Indian nationalism. Finally, I will indicate some of the areas about which, as yet, little has been written, but which may in the future provide new insights into the Indian state.

*The class character of the Indian state:
Marxist analysis and the Indian
communist movement*

The first two decades after Independence saw dramatic developments within the Indian communist movement, developments which revolved around the central questions of the assessment of the Indian state and of revolutionary strategy. By 1970, these questions had split the original Communist Party into three separate sections, and one of these (the CPI(M)) was participating in a State government which was using military force to suppress another (the CPI(M-L)).

It is therefore not surprising that it is in this phase that the dialectical relationship between the evolution of party strategies and that of Marxist scholarship is clearest. It is not my aim to provide a full analysis of the forces which shaped the changes within Indian communism in this period. But it is necessary to outline these changes in order to understand the significance of the analyses of the Indian state produced in the same phase.

Very soon after Independence in 1947, the Communist Party of India (CPI) moved away from its immediate post-Independence characterization of the Congress as 'national democratic' and in 1948 adopted the 'Ranadive Theses' which stated that,

British domination has not ended, but the form of domination has changed ... the march of democratic revolution will have to proceed directly in opposition to the bourgeois government and its policies [cited in Banerjee, 1984: 62].

While this analysis saw general strikes and armed insurrection by the workers in the cities leading directly to a socialist revolution, the Telangana uprising generated an alternative strategy of 'people's democratic revolution' along Chinese lines, in which a number of classes were allied under working-class leadership, and the peasantry, particularly poor and landless peasants, played a far more important role. But both these strategies were based on a similar assessment of the character of state power:

nothing has changed except certain forms of management of this society in the interests of imperialist capital, collaborating Indian bourgeoisie and feudal landlords [Nagi Reddy, 1978: 10].

However, after the withdrawal of the Telangana struggle a new programme and policy statement was formulated under the guidance of the CPSU. The analysis of the state remained essentially the same, and it was concluded that elements of both Ranadive's 'Russian path' and the 'Chinese path' were applicable to India. While the possibility of fundamental transformation through parliamentary means was rejected, the party proposed to use the forthcoming first Indian general election to project and publicize its policies, to mobilize and unify democratic forces, and to expose the Congress government.

But what has been referred to as 'the CPI's progress from the parliamentary tactic in 1951 to the parliamentary strategy in 1958' (Nossiter, 1988: 19) was inevitably linked to a change in the party's assessment of the state. These developments were the result of a combination of factors—the electoral gains of the Communists and the tendency for parliamentary participation to be self-perpetuating; the emergence of 'non-alignment' as an Indian state strategy and

India's acceptance of aid from the Soviet Union (as well as from the United States); and a change in the Soviet Union's view of the Indian state. The latter was clearly very significant; in February 1956, the 20th Congress of the CPSU announced that the newly independent 'non-aligned' states were to be viewed as allies and sanctioned the parliamentary road to socialism.

Two months later the 4th Congress of the CPI at Palghat stated that

the struggle to build the democratic front involves a policy of simultaneous unity with and struggle against the bourgeoisie ... it should not be conceded that the democratic front will be an anti-Congress front [cited in Banerjee, 1984: 72].

This statement evidently implied a major shift away from the earlier characterization of the Indian bourgeoisie as 'reactionary' and 'collaborationist'. It reflected the fact that the bourgeoisie was now perceived as having a 'dual role' of resistance to as well as compromise with imperialism, a role which was seen as stemming from the pursuit by the class as a whole of 'independent capitalist development' (Ghosh, 1955). It also concealed conflicts within the party over both the nature of the state and revolutionary strategy which deepened from the late '50s onwards, leading to the split of 1964.

It is not coincidental that the early '60s also witnessed a growth in academic Marxist writing on the Indian state and India's political economy as a whole. Enough time had elapsed since Independence to allow an appraisal of the changes which state policies had generated, and theories of the nature of the bourgeoisie, its relationship with foreign capital and with the dominant classes in agriculture—the economic role of the state had begun to be elaborated through empirical study. A less formulaistic characterization of the post-Independence Indian state became possible and this inevitably affected debates within the party.

This writing directly confronted Congress's claim to be creating a 'socialist pattern of society' (an aim which had been officially adopted in 1955), and focused upon the class nature of the state intervention in the economy upon which the second and third Five Year Plans were based. In doing this, they traced the involvement of the Indian bourgeoisie in the Independence movement, and concluded that even the early nationalist economic writers identified state intervention as necessary for building the modern capitalist state which they visualized (Namboodiripad, 1966: 24). The expectations of the bourgeoisie in this respect were made most explicit in the 1944 Bombay Plan. In this document, which has been described as the 'policy statement of the Indian bourgeoisie' (Baru, 1988), India's major industrialists

outlined the ways in which they required state assistance in order to establish a secure basis for capitalist accumulation.

Post-Independence experience, it was suggested, confirmed that the public sector, far from threatening private capital, was supporting and nurturing it, creating the infrastructure for its further development, and taking over areas which were too risky for private capital to enter. It was in this context that the concept of 'state capitalism' was formulated. Significantly, this analysis of the Indian capitalist class emphasized its pre-Independence contradictions with colonial capital and did not conform to its earlier characterization by the CPI as essentially subservient to imperialism. However, three important features of post-Independence economic development were noted.

Firstly, there was the rapid growth of monopolies, supported by the state. Secondly, as it became clear that land reform had largely failed to abolish feudal relations, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords was emphasized, and perceived as a major constraint on capitalist development. Thirdly, and related to these, Indian monopoly capital was seen as increasingly collaborating with foreign capital.

These themes, and in particular the question of the internal differentiation of the bourgeoisie and the relationship of its various sections within the state, were reflected to a large extent by the 1964 split in the Communist Party. Following the split, the CPI completed its shift towards the position that the state was

the organ of the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, which upholds and develops capitalist relations of production, distribution and exchange [CPI 1965: 25–6]. •

This class was seen as playing a historically progressive—and anti-imperialist—role. While it was acknowledged that it had 'strong links' with landlords, thus creating 'reactionary pools' within state power, the landlords were not viewed as being among the ruling classes (Das Gupta, 1975). By contrast, for the CPI(M) the state was

the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlord, led by the big bourgeoisie, who were increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development [Das Gupta, 1975: 117].

As Sumanta Banerjee describes in Volume 4 of this series, these assessments led to the formulation of differing strategies in terms of class alliances, but tactically there was little difference, with both parties pledging themselves to 'peaceful means', and in practice, to parliamentary participation as the dominant form of struggle.

It was this question of parliamentary participation, and the related

one of how far mass movements for revolutionary transformation could go in the absence of armed struggle, while still remaining within constitutional and legal limits, which were central to the division within the CPI(M) that ultimately led to the formation of the CPI(M-L) in 1969. Although this was not explicitly stated at the time, these were implicitly questions of the nature of the state—not only of its class character, but of the specific nature of state power and of state structures: how far could the state co-opt and contain opposing forces within its own structures? Under what conditions would the repressive state apparatuses become the dominant means of maintaining the power of the dominant classes? Could the bourgeois-democratic rights enshrined in the Constitution be enforced through mass organizations or would this in itself generate a repressive response requiring armed resistance?

However, there were also major differences in the assessment of the class character of the Indian state. In the context of increasing dependence upon foreign aid, the CPI(M-L) rejected the view that the capitalist class was committed to capitalist development, and characterized the Indian state as a state of big landlords and 'comprador-bureaucrat capitalists', subordinated to US imperialism and Soviet 'social imperialism'. With Indian society characterized as semi-colonial and semi-feudal, the agrarian revolution became one of primary importance.

But the changes which occurred in the agricultural sector from the mid-'60s onwards as a result of the adoption of the New Agricultural Strategy or 'Green Revolution' were to generate a new focus upon agrarian class formation in Indian Marxist writing. Attempts to ascertain whether a process of capitalist transformation was occurring in the regions affected by the Green Revolution precipitated the 'mode of production debate' among Indian economists. However, it was to be some time before analysis of these changes was incorporated into more general Marxist characterizations of the Indian state.³

There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, although several early writers hinted that the strengthening of the class of rich peasants might generate major contradictions within the accumulation process, and therefore pose a new challenge to the state (e.g. Namboodiripad, 1966), it was not until several years later that this class of emerging capitalist farmers began to express this challenge *politically*.

Secondly, the links between 'academic' Marxism and the development of party positions seems to have weakened somewhat in this period: for example, although writers associated with the CPI(M) produced some of the most penetrating analysis of contemporary agrarian transformation, this was not incorporated into the party's

³ Certain contributors to the debate did raise issues directly relating to the state: for example, Alavi (1975).

characterization of the Indian state. If anything, there was a tendency for these writers to modify the terms, if not the content, of their work, in order to make it consistent with existing party positions.

Thirdly, as has been suggested, until this point the focus of Marxist analysis of the state had been almost exclusively upon the identification of the dominant classes—as a participant in a symposium on ‘the class character of state power’ put it,

the basic criterion is: which are the classes for whose benefit essentially state power is exercised [Naqvi, 1973].

The new developments, and in particular the potential contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the emerging capitalist farmers who already dominated the agrarian economy in some regions required a new type of analysis, which looked at the specific ways in which alliances and contradictions were expressed in the structure and actions of the state.

However, a small but significant number of writers responded differently: they drastically revised their assessment of the class character of the state. The 1969 split in the Congress and the anti-monopoly legislation and bank nationalization which followed was identified by some observers as representing a shift in the balance of power from the monopoly bourgeoisie to smaller capitalists.⁶ This, together with the growing political assertion of the rich peasants and emerging capitalist farmers, and the populist rhetoric of Indira Gandhi’s government, led these writers to characterize the Indian state as an ‘intermediate regime’.

The concept of an intermediate regime was first formulated by the economist Kalecki in 1964, to describe ‘underdeveloped’ countries in which an alliance of the ‘lower middle class’ and the rich peasantry controlled state power. The specific conditions favouring the emergence of such regimes were cited as, firstly, the numerical strength of the lower middle classes at the time of the achievement of political independence—when big business was predominantly foreign controlled with limited participation of indigenous capitalists; extensive state involvement in economic activity; and the availability of ‘credits’ from the socialist countries.

To remain in power these classes would need to assure continuous economic growth, in particular through the establishment of ‘a measure of independence’ from foreign capital, and through land reform. These measures would in turn strengthen the ruling classes in several ways. Firstly, ‘state capitalism’ concentrates investment on the expansion of the productive potential of the country, with ‘no danger

⁶ A more convincing explanation is that which contrasts the short-term interests of individual monopolists with the long-term interests of the ‘big bourgeoisie’ as a whole: Indira Gandhi’s strategy of extending the public sector in this period sought to protect the latter.

of forcing small firms out of existence'. Secondly, and equally important, the expansion of state apparatuses creates employment for 'ambitious young men [*sic.*] of the numerous ruling class'. Thirdly, the land reform significantly strengthens the rich peasantry without threatening the 'middle-class' moneylenders and merchants.

The antagonists of this ruling class are defined as 'from above, the upper middle-class allied with foreign capital and feudal landowners' (who are, however, much weakened by land reforms) and from below the unorganized rural and urban poor. But white collar workers and the not very numerous workers of large establishments ... especially when employed in state enterprises (Kalecki, 1967: 165) are identified as allies of the ruling classes.

The most widely discussed although not the first⁷ attempt to apply the theory of intermediate regimes to India was that of Raj (1973). Indeed, Raj's main contribution was to propose a clearer definition of Kalecki's lower middle-class (one which would justify the inclusion of 'not only small proprietors in agriculture, industry and commerce' but the self-employed and salaried professionals), and to examine some of the constraints upon domestic resource mobilization implied in the sharing of state power by rural and urban 'intermediate' classes. In applying these ideas to India, Raj does not go beyond the statement that 'their relevance to India need hardly be mentioned'. But his essay became a focus for a number of Indian critics of intermediate regimes. Their criticisms fall into two interrelated categories: firstly, those which contest the classification of India as an intermediate regime, and secondly those which question the theoretical validity and coherence of the concept itself.

As far as India is concerned, critics pointed to the economic and political strength of the indigenous urban bourgeoisie which had led to its emergence as the dominant class at Independence, and to the ability of this class to use state intervention to strengthen its own position. The growth of the monopoly houses was cited, and increasing attempts to collaborate with foreign capital on 'equal terms' were identified. At the same time, Kalecki's characterization of intermediate regimes as 'clever calves which suck two cows' in their manipulation of the two superpowers was strongly contested in the context of India's experience of Aid-related coercion by the United States.

The instrumental role of land reforms in the intermediate regime model was also challenged in the Indian context: on the one hand, the failure of the state to efficiently implement even limited reform and the survival of 'semi-feudal' production relations in many regions reflected the alliance between the urban bourgeoisie and the feudal

⁷ For an earlier use of the concept in the Indian context, see Sau (1972).

landlord class. On the other hand, to attribute the consolidation of the rich peasantry simply to land reforms carried out as a result of an alliance with the 'lower middle class' is to ignore the struggle waged by this section of the peasantry over the previous decades—'class-for-itself' action which had little connection with any urban intermediate classes.

As for the Kalecki–Raj contention that the organized section of the proletariat are the 'allies' of the regime, industrial struggles and escalating repression against organized workers in this period were, as Das puts it, 'enough to explode any illusions' (Das, 1974: 35).

For Namboodiripad, this class was actually supporting 'middle class employees' in their struggles *against* the ruling classes:

these struggles show that the middle classes, as well as the rural and urban poor, are today ranged with the working class against big business and the feudals; even the rich peasants and the non-big sections of the bourgeoisie are therefore potential allies of the former against the latter [Namboodiripad, 1973: 2136].

This was clearly in line with the CPI(M)'s conception of a 'people's democratic front' against imperialism and its allies in this period, although Namboodiripad does acknowledge the problems associated with

such forms of property as rally (the intermediate classes) against the working class and other sections of the urban and rural poor [Namboodiripad, 1973].

On a theoretical level, criticism of intermediate regimes centres upon one essential point: the regimes 'bear no relationship with modes of production, an essential requirement of any Marxist analysis of state power' and they thus 'de-link political power from economic power' (Das, 1974: 29–36).

Only classes which are dominant within the existing modes of production can remain in control of state power indefinitely. It was emphasized that Marx's '18th Brumaire'—which has been cited as an acknowledgement by Marx of the possibility of a 'middle class' state—characterized the Bonapartist state as coming into being only when 'warring' classes momentarily balance each other. The concept of such a state permanently 'reconciling' these classes is in complete contradiction to Marx's analysis.

In fact even if this concept is accepted on its own terms, the idea that the urban 'lower middle-classes' and the rich peasantry can 'share' state power ignores the inherent contradiction between the rich peasants' demands for high agricultural prices and the interests of the urban intermediate classes as consumers. As Raj himself acknowledges, the constraints placed by this alliance upon the ability of the state to extract an investible surplus from the agricultural sector are

likely to lead to increased dependence on foreign aid.⁸ Yet a stipulated condition for the survival of intermediate regimes is a growing independence from foreign capital.

But more importantly, as Das points out, the 'lower middle-class' does not control the means of production and thus cannot emerge as the dominant class within any conceivable social formation. Its sections cannot exist autonomously but link themselves with the class which controls the means of production and political power. In contrast, according to Das,

the rich peasantry is a class distinguished by ownership over means of production, entering into definite relations of production [Das, 1974: 31].

However, the question which also needs to be asked is whether rich peasants acquiring state power remain rich peasants. Surely this class is likely to use state power precisely to facilitate its transformation into large-scale capitalist farmers and ultimately through the process of expanded reproduction, into industrial capitalists (of a more or less dependent nature).⁹

Kalecki attempts to side-step the whole question of the relationship between political power and economic dominance with the claim that 'big business' is 'checked by the fear of the urban and rural proletariat, from which it is effectively separated by the ruling lower-middle-class'. The theoretical implications of this are made clearer in an early attempt to apply intermediate regimes analysis to India (Sau, 1972).

The newly avowed commitment to channelling resources towards mass consumption would, Sau suggests, benefit the 'petty bourgeoisie and rich peasantry'. But the reason given for their introduction is the desperation of the 'big bourgeoisie' and their feudal allies to

erect and fortify a buffer in the form of the petty bourgeoisie and rich peasantry, against the workers and peasants [Sau, 1972: 1577-9].

This implication of a power 'behind' state power (which is controlled by the intermediate classes) reveals the failure of the theorists of intermediate regimes to analyse adequately the very concept of the state. This is perhaps most obvious in the importance given to the recruitment of the intermediate classes into the state bureaucracy,

⁸ Notwithstanding the fact that their relationship with the state has been very different from that suggested by Raj, the resistance of the rich peasants (and emerging capitalist farmers) to the appropriation of their surplus by the state has had precisely this result over the last two decades.

⁹ As Gill (1988) has suggested, the crisis in the Punjab can at least be partially explained in terms of the constraints upon agrarian capitalists attempting to make this transition in the context of the dominance of the monopoly bourgeoisie at a national level.

which is seen as a reflection of the political dominance of these classes, confusing the apparatus of the state and its personnel with the state itself. These problems, and in particular the inability of the theory of intermediate regimes to predict or adequately explain the phenomenon of the Emergency led to the Indian applications of it being more or less consigned to oblivion in the late '70s. But confusion over the nature of state power also characterized another set of writers who were influenced by the experiences of the Emergency and the years immediately preceding its imposition.

The bourgeois state, authoritarianism, and hegemony

By the early '70s there was a widespread awareness that there could be no substantial improvement in the living standards of the subordinate classes—whether landless labourers and poor peasants in the countryside or unorganized and organized workers in the cities—within the constraints of the existing state.

At the same time, contradictions between the different sections of the dominant classes, and most strikingly between the urban bourgeoisie as a whole and the class of capitalist farmers in the process of formation in certain regions, were becoming increasingly sharp. This in turn intensified the exploitation of the direct producers. In the rural areas the process of capitalist transformation meant increased landlessness and often worsened conditions for agricultural labour. Meanwhile the emerging capitalist farmers were organizing increasingly effectively to prevent the state—and the industrial sector—from appropriating a surplus from the agricultural sector through mechanisms such as prices and taxation. The result was that the urban bourgeoisie depended increasingly on raising the rate of exploitation in industry in order to maintain their profits, and it was the urban workforce which, along with the rural poor, bore the burden of rising agricultural prices (Mitra, 1977).

Against this background, there was a resurgence of the Left, reflecting growing militancy among the most exploited sections of society. The uprisings of poor peasants and landless labourers led by the CPI(M-L), concentrated in the countryside of West Bengal, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh, were followed by widespread industrial unrest. Heterogeneous class forces ultimately coalesced in a series of mass agitations which began in Gujarat and culminated in the *Nava Nirman* movement in Bihar in 1974–5 under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan.

The Congress government and party responded to these developments in three significant ways. Firstly, in the wake of the 1969 split,

the party was made far more centralized, consolidating Indira Gandhi's position and enabling her to bypass the powerful State-based leaders who essentially represented the dominant agrarian classes. Secondly, as we have seen, there was a partial resurrection of the 'socialist' rhetoric of the Nehru era, with populist slogans such as '*garibi hatao*' being used in the presentation of measures such as the nationalization of fourteen banks and limited anti-monopoly legislation. Thus,

central to the Congress strategy was the attempt to marginalize the party 'bosses' through mobilizing countervailing support through an invocation of ideological rhetoric—the mediating structures in mobilization were dispensed with, and there was far greater reliance on Indira Gandhi's charismatic authority in order to engender support [Hasan, 1989: 15].

Thirdly, Left-led peasant movements and workers' struggles were violently crushed, and there was a dramatic increase in the repressive powers of the state, culminating in the imposition of a national internal Emergency in 1975.

It was in this context that for the first time a sustained focus upon the specific nature of state power in India began to develop among Marxist writers. The idea of the 'authoritarian' state in which the repressive apparatuses play an increasingly important role in maintaining state power was elaborated in the Indian context and the historical continuity between the structures of the post-Independence apparatuses and those of the colonial state was noted. Linked to this was a discussion of the 'relative autonomy' of the state, and in particular, the role of the bureaucracy.

Underlying the tendency to authoritarianism, according to these analyses, was the failure of the bourgeoisie to establish its hegemony over civil society, or as one writer puts it,

the structural dissonance ... between a bourgeois polity and a society in which the bourgeoisie suffers from economic and cultural underdevelopment ... this is a bourgeois state that is continually in search of a full-fledged bourgeois society to sustain and strengthen it.

In this situation,

the characteristically bourgeois form of parliamentary democracy based on universal franchise stands a good chance or risk of pursuing a logic of self-destruction, leading to an authoritarian or fascist form [Rao, 1989: 89–90].¹⁰

¹⁰ An early reference to the 'unrealized social hegemony' of the bourgeoisie was made by Sen (1972) who later elaborated the thesis in an essay entitled 'Bureaucracy and Social Hegemony' (Sen, 1976). More recently, these ideas have been presented in Hasan (Ed.), 1989, although some contributors to the same volume, notably Ray, are critical of them.

There are clearly several major problems with this characterization of the Indian social formation. Firstly, the identification of the bourgeoisie as the dominant class within the social formation does not automatically lead to the assumption that the Indian state is a 'bourgeois' state in the sense implied (i.e. bourgeois–democratic). This is particularly so when the dominance of the bourgeoisie is seen as maintained through an alliance with powerful, and in many cases, non-capitalist agrarian classes, as well as with imperialism.

This assumption seems indeed to be based on the existence of particular formal state structures such as the Constitution and the 'characteristically bourgeois form' of parliamentary democracy. But as has been noted (Gupta, 1977), these forms are not suited to the needs of every bourgeoisie under every set of conditions. Their importance in the Indian context can only be gauged by looking at the reality of the functioning of the state apparatuses, which may reflect far more clearly the articulation of several modes of production within the social formation. The close relationship between the police and powerful landlords in several States is only one example of such functioning. This theme is developed further elsewhere in this essay.

A second and closely related problem is that of the use of the concept of 'hegemony' in these analyses. The writers who use it refer directly or indirectly to Gramsci's definition of the term. For Gramsci the establishment of hegemony by a class involved the creation of a 'hegemonic bloc', with which allied and even enemy classes actively identify. In his analysis of 'common sense' he showed how the appropriation, incorporation, and transformation of elements of existing and residual ideologies associated with other classes (and modes of production) is a vital part of this process (Gramsci, 1971).

However, the evidence presented for the absence of bourgeois hegemony in India has been almost invariably the absence of certain bourgeois ideas or 'values' (such as 'secularism', or 'democracy') which are a central element within the dominant ideology of Western advanced capitalist states. Thus the central problem is that

the Indian state and the strata of the bourgeoisie committed to the capitalist modernization have clearly failed in propagating the ideology of secularism, in shaking off the shackles of religion, caste and community loyalties which are binding on all classes [Bhambri, 1989: 85].

Or more explicitly,

peasant and tribal identities continued to assert themselves, acting as a potent check to the spread of bourgeois hegemony [Mukherjee, 1989: 109].

Yet surely the establishment of a hegemonic bloc led by the bourgeoisie would involve the appropriation and transformation of

precisely these ideas identities and 'loyalties' and their incorporation into a hegemonic ideology. This aspect of hegemony becomes even more significant in a social formation where capitalism is economically articulated with other modes of production, and where colonialism and imperialism have shaped the development of the bourgeoisie. I would argue that the ways in which the ideology of caste, as well as Hindu communalism, have become part of a dominant ideology are examples of this process.

In this context, the ideas developed in a recent contribution by Guha (1989), are extremely relevant. The main focus of the article is on the nature of British colonialism in India, which is characterized as 'dominance without hegemony'¹¹ and the failure of even 'radical' nationalists to grasp this nature, and to recognize the colonial state as

the barrier at which the universalist urge must inexorably stop [Guha, 1989: 307].

This failure, Guha argues, in turn prevented the post-colonial dominant class from transforming the state and acquiring its own hegemony.

Analysing the use of British liberal idioms such as 'Order', 'Improvement', and 'Obedience', on the one hand, and Indian semi-feudal ones such as 'Danda', 'Dharma', and 'Bhakti' on the other, Guha strikingly demonstrates

the process of condensation and displacement by which the ideological moments of social contradictions in pre-colonial India and modern England were fused with those of the living contradictions of colonial rule to structure the relation D/S (Dominance/Subordination) [Guha 1989: 271].

However, Guha's conclusion that this process constitutes further evidence for his central (and itself undeniable) assertion that coercion far outweighed persuasion in the maintenance of colonial rule seems problematic. Having defined hegemony as

a condition of Dominance ... such that, in the organic composition of the latter, Persuasion ... outweighs Coercion [Guha, 1989: 231],

he argues that the survival of earlier 'cultural modes' (as expressed for instance in religious practices) which are incorporated into the dominant mode, signifies the absence of such hegemony. Appropriation is thus not considered to be a part of the strategy for establishing hegemony. The implication is that such survivals did not occur in metropolitan states once the hegemony of the bourgeoisie had been

¹¹ As this phrase implies, Guha 'avoids the Gramscian juxtaposition of domination and hegemony ... as antinomies' (Guha, 1989: 231). I have similarly used the term 'dominance' to refer to a condition which may or may not constitute 'hegemony'.

established—even at the level of ‘commonsense’ notions. If they did, then the entire concept of hegemony becomes a purely theoretical one; an ideal type which can only be approximated in reality.

In distinguishing between the dominance of the post-Independence Indian bourgeoisie and that of the metropolitan bourgeoisies, another aspect of Gramscian hegemony, which was a central pillar of one of the earliest and most convincing statements of the non-hegemonic state thesis (Sen, 1976), but unaccountably disappeared in the later accounts cited above, is perhaps of greater significance.¹²

This is the condition that

the given social group is really progressive—i.e. really causes the whole society to move forward, not merely satisfying its own existential requirements, but continuously augmenting its cadres for the conquest of ever new spheres of economic and productive activity [Gramsci, 1971, 60].

In the Indian context, this failure to transform, to ‘cause the whole society to move forward’, can be seen as resulting from the inherent weakness of the Indian bourgeoisie, whose development had been retarded by colonialism.

Symptomatic of this lack of development was the organic link between the bourgeoisie and the dominant feudal classes. As we have seen, a large section of Indian Marxists recognized very early that it was on the basis of an alliance with the feudal landlords that the Indian bourgeoisie had acquired state power at Independence.

As a result, the elements of pre-capitalist modes of production which were retained within the social formation were not necessarily those which further the development of an indigenous capitalism. The most striking example of this is the failure of the state to fully transform the agricultural sector, and to appropriate from it a surplus adequate for successful industrialization.

Thus, if Guha has described the limitations of the colonial state and the failure of bourgeois nationalism to recognize this, and therefore to transform the state, the crucial corollary of his argument, its other face, refers to the limitations of the indigenous bourgeoisie itself, which resulted from colonialism, and prevented it from transforming the economy.

At the same time, given these constraints on the development of

¹² For Sen, ‘the inadequate role of the bourgeoisie in the introduction of an advanced mode of production. ... its failure to bring about agrarian transformation, and its repeated compromises with the failure of feudal property and power ...’ characterizes its failure to establish its hegemony over civil society, and leads to a situation where ‘the system of capitalist exploitation’ is enforced ‘under the aegis of autocratic power’ (Sen, 1976: 670).

capitalism, elements of pre-capitalist ideologies have been actively strengthened in a way which contributes to the maintenance of the power of the ruling alliance—an alliance in which the bourgeoisie remains dominant. In fact, in the context of a growing crisis of accumulation generated by the contradictions inherent in this alliance, pre-capitalist ideas have become increasingly important elements in the dominant ideology within which this alliance is legitimized.

So, while the validity of the use of the term 'hegemony' in the context of an absence of dynamic transformation may be debatable, the rigid distinction drawn between the values of the 'state' and those of 'society' in many analyses (a view which owes more to the Weberian notion of 'institutionalization' than to Marxist theory) does not seem to contribute much to an understanding of the nature of the dominance of India's ruling classes.

Other writers have argued that it was specific developments in this phase which created the conditions for the Emergency. In particular, as suggested earlier, the strategy of capitalist development in agriculture pursued by the state led to a whole new set of contradictions within the political economy as a result of the emergence of new classes in the countryside. But this then needs to be analysed in terms of a crisis of accumulation, and in fact a crisis of the state itself, rather than primarily as a crisis of hegemony.

This is not to suggest that there have not been major challenges to the dominant ideology. The concept of hegemony itself implies the possibility of

opposing classes ... organising and forming themselves into an autonomous political force [Buci-Glucksmann, 1980: 57].

But it is important to recognize that these conflicts cannot be understood through the dichotomy of 'democratic' and 'pre-democratic', or even capitalist and pre-capitalist forms. Rather they are inherent in the pattern of capitalist development pursued by the Indian state since Independence. Thus, for example, Byres (1988) describes the 'neo-populism' of Charan Singh (the "organic" intellectual of the rich and middle peasantry) as

an ideology which, in its concrete and differing manifestations, has been shaped in response to objective class-in-itself changes in the countryside, as yet incompletely worked out (and with no guarantee that they will be worked out completely); and which provides a rationale for class-for-itself action on behalf of those sections of the peasantry ... which are clearly better off [Byres 1988: 170].

This particular ideology—and those related ones which link these interests with specific regional identities—have been dominant in a

series of political movements which have directly challenged state power. But in certain cases they are also inscribed in the practices of the state structures themselves, particularly at local and regional level, where these peasant classes have become dominant.

It is the ideologies of Left-led movements of the exploited classes, ideologies which far from being pre-capitalist are inspired by Marxism (and genuinely 'democratic'), which the Indian state has inevitably found impossible to genuinely incorporate, despite what Kaviraj (1988) describes as 'the disingenuous insertion of ceremonial socialistic principles' into the Constitution. Such movements include those demanding that the basic civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution are granted to all sections of society.¹¹

Both these examples of challenges to the dominant ideology clearly raise further questions about the validity of the bourgeois-democratic state/'pre-democratic' civil society dichotomy (Khan, 1989: 50), and suggest that the state itself—both its structures and its ideology—may be the site of ultimately irreconcilable contradictions.

The Indian state in the '80s: structure and ideology

The Janata coalition which came to power in 1977 essentially represented an uneasy alliance between the various elements of the urban bourgeoisie and the rich peasants and capitalist farmers, an alliance which shortly collapsed under the weight of its own internal contradictions. But the years which followed the Emergency saw these contradictions among different sections of the dominant classes increasingly express themselves in the rise or resurgence of regionally-based parties. Parties like the Telegu Desam and the AIADMK were also strengthened by the emergence of new regionally based fragments of industrial capital, as agrarian capitalists sought new avenues for the investment of surpluses accumulated in agriculture.

Meanwhile the Congress, which regained control at the Centre in

¹¹ The question of the establishment and durability of 'Left Front' governments is clearly a vital one in this context, and has been discussed in some detail by S. Banerjee elsewhere (see Volume 4). In analysing the significance of these governments, the distinction between 'co-option' or 'passive revolution' and genuine incorporation into a hegemonic bloc may be useful. For Gramsci, 'passive revolution' (which is at some points, but not consistently, contrasted in his writings with the establishment of hegemony), involved the 'absorption ... of the active elements produced by allied groups' and even enemy ones (Gramsci, 1971: 59). This 'absorption' of the leadership is very different from securing the active collaboration of a class which has occurred in the case of certain rich peasant-dominated political forces. The latter, unlike the former, involves significant changes in the dominant ideology, and as we have seen, leaves open the possibility of effective opposition.

1980 and retained it for the next nine years, proceeded to further centralize the state and strengthen its coercive powers.¹¹ In conjunction with this, it largely abandoned the earlier strategy of 'wooing' minority groups, particularly Muslims, and the most oppressed sections of the producing classes, with its characteristic pluralist brand of populism. Instead, it identified itself more and more closely with 'caste' Hindus, increasingly incorporating elements of Hindu chauvinist ideology. The participation of national as well as local Congress leaders in communal violence marked a new phase in which Hindu chauvinism was explicitly visible in the material practices of the state. However, this also strengthened openly Hindu communal parties such as the BJP, which ultimately (as the 1989 election confirmed) were able to effectively challenge Congress itself in several regions.

These developments accompanied, and were consistent with, significant economic restructuring. Trends which had begun during the Emergency were intensified as the Indian bourgeoisie attempted to deal with a major crisis of accumulation. Restructuring referred to both the structure of output, which shifted towards the production of luxury consumer goods for the 'top 10%' of the population in income terms, and the structure of production, in which the production process was increasingly fragmented, with sub-contracting facilitating an increase in the rate of exploitation. 'Liberalization' policies, particularly after 1984, allowed far easier access to foreign capital and foreign technology. And these shifts inevitably involved a concerted attack on organized labour.¹²

Against this background, there was a massive increase in political action based upon national, regional, caste, and religious identities in the '80s. And it was faced with these movements and agitations, and most notably the crisis in the Punjab, which led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, that Marxists began to explore new areas in their analyses of the Indian state.

One of the most important of these areas was that of Centre-State relations. According to Sathyamurthy (1985), after 1977,

the assertiveness with which the ruling parties or coalitions in the States raised demands for a greater devolution of economic (i.e. financial) and political power reflected the tensions and contradictions that had been in the process of unfolding for well over a decade, between the national

¹¹ Constitutional and legislative changes in this period which contributed to this process included the 59th Amendment, and the *Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act* (TADA). This was passed in 1985 and renewed with Amendment in 1987.

¹² The consequences of 'liberalization', which has been intensified since the assumption of power by the Congress (I) minority government in July 1991, have already begun to gather added momentum.

bourgeoisie (representing the interests or claiming to represent the interests of all segments of the Indian ruling class) as a whole on the one hand, and, on the other, the dominant segments within it centred in the regions [Sathyamurthy, 1985: 1219].

Thus, as 'intra-ruling class' contradictions intensified, they came to be located more than ever in the structure of the state as a whole. In analysing this, Marxist writers moved beyond simply identifying the dominant classes, their alliances and their contradictions, and began to look at how these relationships were expressed and perpetuated through and within the structures of the state.

A closely related theme which has also emerged in more recent writings on the Indian state is that of the ideological construction of the Indian 'nation', and in particular the role of the concept of internal and external 'threats' to 'national integrity' within the discourse of the Indian state. In this context, the historical roots of the implicit correlation between 'Hindu' and 'Indian' identities within this discourse have been traced. Again, this marks a departure from earlier analysis in its explicit focus on ideology, and implicitly challenges the assumption that the Indian bourgeoisie is necessarily committed to either 'secularism' or 'democracy'.

But alongside the growth of religion, caste, and nationality based struggles which have been frequently associated with contradictions among the dominant classes, the '80s has been a phase of struggles for basic rights among the most oppressed sections of society,

popular struggles that are widespread, militant and better organized than the struggles of the pre-Emergency period [KB, 1985: 499].

Many of these struggles are taking place outside the framework of the established left parties, and are attempting to deal with issues which were previously neglected by the Left (Balagopal, 1991). Thus questions of gender, caste, and other forms of oppression which are closely articulated with, but not identical with, class oppression are being raised within these movements. These developments have themselves inevitably affected Marxist writing on the state: its scope has broadened, with a greater emphasis on consciousness and ideology. In addition, as activists of these movements have been drawn into the debate the constraining effects of 'party lines' regarding the state have tended to diminish, while at the same time the dialectical relationship between academic theory and activist practice has begun to be re-established.

Some questions for the future

Marxist writing on the Indian state constitutes a vast and complex

literature which it would be impossible for an essay of this length to analyse exhaustively. Instead I have attempted to identify and discuss some of the trends within this literature which represented major developments in the conceptualization of the Indian state. In this section I will outline some of the areas about which relatively little has yet been written, and which may represent new avenues of enquiry in the future.

The nature of the dominant classes within the Indian social formation, and of their relationships with each other, has emerged as a central theme in Marxist analysis of the Indian state. Yet there has been relatively little analysis of the specific ways in which the daily operation of the state embodies these alliances and contradictions, the ways in which, as Poulantzas has put it, they are 'inscribed in the institutional materiality of the state' (Poulantzas, 1980: 14).

Such analysis would require an investigation into the operation of the state at a number of different levels. For example, the Indian state has outlawed discrimination on the basis of caste (and has in certain contexts introduced 'positive discrimination' in favour of 'low' castes). At the same time, oppression of and discrimination against Dalits explicitly through caste not only continues, but is reinforced by the repressive apparatuses of the state. Does this represent a disjuncture between the state and civil society? Or can oppression on the basis of caste actually be seen to be institutionalized by the state, expressing the articulation between capitalist and pre-capitalist (or transitional) modes of exploitation?

This is not to suggest that the material practices of the state and its apparatuses have not been examined. Breman's (1985) study of the reality of 'state protection for the rural proletariat of South Gujarat' is just one good example (Breman, 1985); the functioning of the so-called 'landlord-police nexus' in Bihar has been extensively documented, and some of the implications of the activities of landlord armies—sharing the state's 'monopoly of violence'—have been discussed (Das, 1986). Similarly, the question of articulation of modes of production has been raised in relation to the state's tacit condoning of 'sati'. In this context, the extent to which the particular forms of capitalist development which have occurred have actually strengthened patriarchal and caste-based elements within pre-capitalist cultures have been brought out especially clearly in an analysis of the Deorala episode (Jain, Misra, and Srivastava, 1987). However, in general, these findings have not been integrated into broader theoretical characterizations of the state, even when the state itself is characterized as 'capitalist-landlord dominated'.¹⁶

¹⁶ The tendency has been for these general theories to revert to a version of the 'patronage' argument, suggesting that the power of the dominant agrarian classes at a

Indeed within 'politics' as a discipline, it appears that the arena of empirical studies has largely been appropriated by non-Marxist 'political scientists' who have used 'village studies' to elaborate theories such as that of 'patronage' and repudiate class analysis. Meanwhile, Marxist writers, in emphasizing the class character of the state, have ironically tended to remain focused upon the higher echelons of state structures and the formulation of policy. Apart from the importance of empirical study for any dialectical materialist analysis, it is particularly important to situate the state with respect to the relations of production, a task which can only be carried out through continual reassessment. There is thus clearly a need for Marxists to reclaim the empirical level as an important element within Marxist analysis of the Indian state.

Further analysis of ideology and of 'subaltern' consciousness in the context of the state is also vitally necessary. It is noticeable that the few existing studies of specific ideologies and of 'popular culture' as a site of struggle between them have tended to be carried out by Marxists outside the 'politics' rubric.¹⁷ Marxist writers in general have not heeded Kosambi's exhortation to look at popular culture in order to understand the state (Kosambi, 1962).¹⁸ Such analysis would help to clarify questions relating to, for example, the articulation of caste and class, or the dynamic of Hindu chauvinism, and in more general terms help to resolve the question of 'hegemony' in the context of the Indian social formation.

The related issues of consciousness within movements of opposition to the state have also not been fully explored. The attempt by the 'Subaltern Studies' group to write 'history from below' has not been mirrored by any sustained attempt to analyse the perspective of the participants in contemporary struggles waged by the most oppressed sections of the producing classes. As the Left in India attempts to reassess the importance of identities which are not explicitly class identities, and struggles to build an alternative to the 'mass movements' led by sections of the dominant classes, this has become an increasingly vital task.

NOTE

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local level is such that they can 'subvert' the processes of what is essentially a 'bourgeois-democratic' state.

¹⁷ For example, Pandian (1986); Byres (1988).

¹⁸ Kosambi was referring to the state in ancient India, about which 'anthropological evidence' drawn from contemporary popular myths and religious practices is a vital source of information. But his basic principle, and his view that popular culture contains elements from earlier modes of production, which in turn can be transformed and appropriated to meet the needs of new modes, is equally applicable to a study of the present-day Indian state.

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The Indian National Congress • 9 and the Dynamics of Nation- Building: Aspects of Continuity and Change

SURANJAN DAS

Introduction

Nation-building in India is linked to a large extent with the history of the Indian National Congress. This is not to suggest that the story of Indian politics over the past hundred years can be reduced to the Congress experience. But it either 'became a point of reference' or directly influenced 'many of the continuities and changes in India's intellectual, social and political life' (Masselos, 1987). Originally representing a movement for freedom, the Congress was transformed into a party with a rigid vertical and hierarchical organization. In the post-independence period, the party experienced at least two major splits, had itself renamed as the Congress(I) in 1978,¹ and became the principal instrument for the establishment of what has come to be called 'one-party democracy' in the country. In delineating the contours of such changes, standard scholarly works have recognized

After the first split (1969), Congress (R) emerged as the ruling party.

15 August 1947 as a dividing line when a 'Great Congress' started to give way to a 'Dirty Congress', operating the administrative machinery left behind by the departing colonial rulers, and thereby losing its credibility as a fighter for freedom.

This chapter rejects this simplistic formulation, in favour of portraying the dialectics of the Congress in the context of ideology and state power. It is argued that those features of the post-1947 Congress, which are recognized as having generated 'negative' or 'regressive' elements in Indian democracy, were already latent at the time of the freedom movement. The Non-cooperation Movement begins this survey because it marked the first major all-India nationalist affront to British colonialism. The analysis ends with the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in January 1964 which brought to a close the first phase of nation-building in India.

The Indian National Congress: aspects of its historical legacy

The dialectics of Congress nationalism: the politics of controlled mass politics and marginalization of radicalism.

The predominant feature of mainstream Congress nationalism was its disapproval of class politics. Gandhi's immediate objective was to forge national unity against British colonialism, cutting across class lines. Contemporary leftist critics such as Saumyen Tagore, however, sought to expose the myth of Gandhi's multi-class front.

'The idea of national bloc is an illusion, and indeed a very dangerous one.... The Indian bourgeoisie is not so fast asleep not so stupid as not to see that a revolution here, while destroying British domination, would also inevitably destroy their own domination. It would rather share the profits with the British imperialists than have no profits at all ... Two different classes, two different attitudes towards British imperialism—that is the sole reality. [Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 182.]

The historical veracity of this thesis was largely proved when, at all major critical junctures during the freedom movement, the Congress High Command inevitably intervened to ensure that 'mass turbulence' against the British Raj did not threaten the economic interests of small landlords and rich peasants in the countryside, and of the nascent Indian bourgeoisie in towns.

In the wake of the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920–1, agrarian riots rocked such parts of the United Provinces as Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh, Fyzabad and Sultanpur. But Gandhi condemned this

'plebian outburst' for its 'proneness to violence', a condemnation which persuaded the local Congress leaders to distance themselves from the uprising, surprising even British officials (Reeves, 1966; Crawley, 1971). Not surprisingly, when the peasant leader Baba Ramchandra was arrested on 10 February 1921, all-India Congress leaders such as Motilal Nehru and Gauri Shankar Misra remarked:

We must not be unhappy over this and must not even try to get him released [Sarkar, 1983: 223].

Recent researches have also demonstrated that the Bihar Provincial Congress ensured the stability of the small landlord/rich peasant alliance by refusing organizational support to anti-planter agitations from 1917 to 1923, by insulating itself from Swami Vidyand-led peasant outbursts against the Darbhanga Raj, and by disclaiming any connection with attempts to fuse peasant anger with nationalist fervour during the Non-cooperation Movement (Henningham, 1982).

The Congress High Command also 'thoroughly disliked' such aspects of popular militancy in Bengal in the 1920s as the labour unrest in Calcutta jute mills, the peasant protest against indigo cultivation, the anti-Union Board, and anti-Chaukidari tax agitations, the peasant resistance to Settlement operations and the jail-breaks (Sarkar, 1983). When the communists in Bengal made their presence felt in the late '20s the mainstream Congress leadership opted to close ranks with the government against the 'new menace'. As has been remarked,

Gandhi's insistence on non-violent revolution on the one hand, and deprecation of communism on the other, lightened the government's task, but it cost Gandhi his claim to mass leadership [in Bengal]. [Bandyopadhyay, 1984.]

Other parts of India experienced departures from Gandhi's original message. The princely states of Ajmer, Mewar and Udaipur witnessed peasant protest against feudal exactions. Madras—long considered to be the backyard of Indian politics—was rocked by a spate of labour turbulence in British-owned textile mills which brought into prominence Singaravelu Chettiar, the first communist of south India to challenge Gandhi's placation of 'capitalist autocracy' (Sarkar, 1983). In the Andhra region, nationalism linked itself with poor peasant discontent through the 'forest satyagrahas' of 1921–2, while the millenarian Moplah uprisings in Malabar shook the local socio-political order. The relatively isolated district of Assam was itself struck by sporadic strikes and violence in the tea gardens of Darang and Sibsagar districts; but they did not evoke any interest or excitement

amongst the provincial Congress leaders, most of whom were planters themselves (Guha, 1977).

Such radical potentialities within the Non-cooperation Movement alarmed both Gandhi and the British, even if for different reasons. Gandhi was disillusioned because of the failure to keep the movement within his ideological parameters; the British were threatened by the spread of disaffection within society at large. At this juncture the episode at Chauri Chaura, where an angry crowd burnt alive twenty-two policemen, became a handy excuse for Gandhi to withdraw the Non-cooperation Movement on the ground that it had degenerated into violence. This sudden unilateral retreat caused deep anguish amongst the contemporary Left, who suspected that Gandhi's action was primarily dictated by a need to protect the feudal classes who appeared to have been threatened by the dynamism of the Non-cooperation Movement. Interestingly, the *Congress Working Committee's Bardoli Resolution* of 12 February 1921, which ratified the discontinuation of the Non-cooperation Movement, reiterated that

[the] withholding of rent payments to the *zamindars* is contrary to the Congress resolutions [and that the] Congress movement in no way intended to attack their (zamindars') legal rights [Dutt, 1979: 290].

During the Civil Disobedience Movement the Congress High Command sustained its efforts to separate political from social issues, pressing

brakes on any radical action likely to involve a direct conflict between the exploiters and the exploited in Indian society [Pandey, 1978: 208].

At the height of peasant unrest in Agra, Rae Bareilly, Baroda, and Bilauti, following the economic depression of 1930–1, the Congress leadership of the United Provinces advocated 'an amicable settlement ... and a maintenance of truce' (Pandey, 1978: 198). Gandhi assuaged the UP Zamindars' Association in 1931:

We do not want that the tenants should stand against *zamindars* ... we assure *zamindars* that their rights would be given due consideration in a *Swaraj* constitution [Bandyopadhyay, 1984].

In another message to the Uttar Pradesh *kisans* on 24 May 1931, Gandhi was more explicit.

[L]et me warn you against listening to the advice if it has reached you that you have no need to pay the *zamindars* or *taluqdars* any rent at all [Sarkar, 1983: 315].

When local leaders such as Kalika Prasad preached 'no-rent' and promised lower rents under *Swaraj*, they were disciplined severely by the Congress High Command. In working class politics also, the High

Command inevitably forced the adoption of compromise postures with Indian mercantile and industrial groups.

In Bihar—despite popular enthusiasm—the Civil Disobedience Movement could never assume the form of a no-rent campaign because the Congress leadership had a distinctly conservative landlord orientation (Henningham, 1982). The Bihar Congress leadership disapproved of Swami Sahajanand's Kisan Sabha agitations between 1936 and 1939 and Rajendra Prasad indicated that Congress was ready to compensate the foreign cloth dealers for their 'heavy loss' due to the Civil Disobedience Movement (Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 201). Similarly, Bengal witnessed considerable popular militancy, which so alarmed the 'leftist' Jawaharlal Nehru that the Provincial Cess Committee was directed not to 'alienate the tradesmen and professionals' (Sarkar, 1987: 97). Much of the peasant and workers' politics which developed in Bengal between 1928 and 1934 accordingly remained outside the parameters of Congress nationalism (Das, 1988).

In Gujarat, as Hardiman demonstrates, whenever the Patidar movement threatened the social structure, it was checked either by mobilizing the richer peasants or by withdrawing the agitation (Hardiman, 1981). During the same period, other parts of the country were also affected by what the Congress national leadership referred to as 'less manageable forms of agitation'.

The emergence of revolutionary alternatives from within the Civil Disobedience Movement threatened the existing indigenous social order which, as Sarkar shows, impelled the Indian Business interests to pressurize Gandhi to terminate the Movement and conclude the Peace Pact with Viceroy Irwin. Khaitan, in his presidential address before the Calcutta Indian Chamber of Commerce, had asserted:

[I]t may not be amiss to suggest to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that the time has come when they should explore the possibilities of an honourable settlement.... We all want peace. [Sarkar, 1976, cited in Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 200.]

The withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement re-emphasized the conservative face of mainstream Congress leadership. In 1927, Gandhi had represented the working class impressively during a prolonged strike in the Tata Iron & Steel Works. But when, in 1935, the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association ordered a 25 per cent cut in wages, Gandhi advised the workers to 'accept that cheerfully' (Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 206). In an open letter to the Ahmedabad millhands Gandhi remarked,

I hope you will welcome the settlement which has been reached on the question of your wages and cheerfully accept the reduction ... I have not

the least doubt that it will be in your interests to do so and thereby your prestige will be enhanced ... the millowners have invested their capital, your capital is labour. Either would be worthless without the other ... If you have imbibed this truth, you will recognize that the settlement safeguards the interests of both the parties. [Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 206.]

By 1934 Jawaharlal Nehru had accepted the authority of the conservative sections of the Congress High Command, and Tej Bahadur Sapru noted with satisfaction the change in a man who

a few days ago ... was going strong and preaching his new philosophy of socialism everywhere in the midst of crowded audiences [Bandyopadhyay, 1984: 205].

Conservative centralism, which had emerged as the dominant feature of the Congress in the course of the 'movement phase' of the '20s and '30s was strengthened further in the post-1936 period, once the Congress formed provincial ministries under the *Government of India Act 1935*. The Quit India Movement of August 1942 outstripped the traditional constraints imposed by the central Congress leadership; the August Revolution, however, was Gandhian in name but not in form.

The 1935 Act and after: consolidation of the Right within the Congress

The Congress election machinery set up to contest the 1936 legislative assembly elections had a distinct conservative leverage. Candidates were mostly selected from local businessmen, contractors, and landlords, who could not only take care of their own campaigns but could also replenish the party's exchequer (Tomlinson, 1976). Defections from non-Congress parties were also encouraged in provinces where the party's organization was not yet strong (Baker, 1976). This process 'increased the strength of the conservatives' (Gautam, 1985: 104), and it was this section inside the party which clinched political power when the Congress formed ministries initially in the six provinces of Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces, Orissa, Bihar, United Provinces, and later in the North-West Frontier Provinces and Assam.

The rightist orientation of Congress ministers was reflected in similarities between their style of functioning and that of the preceding British officers (Namboodripad, 1986). Several members of the Indian Civil Service noted with relief that 'fire-eating agitators' had turned into 'responsible ministers'. Symington, for instance, observed this metamorphosis in Bombay:

It was a momentous occasion when, in the month of April, we came under the rule of the party which had been agitating against the British Raj for more than twenty years. But, if anyone at the time expected

dramatic and revolutionary changes, he was in for an anticlimax. Our new Government had enough sense and experience to realise that nine-tenths of its work would lie in the field of day-to-day administration, and that spectacular reform must be a fringe activity. [Hunt and Harrison, 1980: 196–7.]

Masterman, then a Secretary in the Madras secretariat, had a roughly similar story to tell when he proudly noted:

He [Rajaji] told me once that he had much greater confidence in the judgement of his British secretaries than in his Indian colleagues [Hunt and Harrison, 1980: 198].

This element of continuity between the Congress ministries and their British predecessors could be best felt in their respective reactions to various strands of popular protest. By December 1937 the Congress governments were faced with a dilemma. While the Kisan Sabhas—enthused by the formation of ‘popular regimes’—pressed for fundamental agrarian reforms, the landlords urged the Congress to contain the ‘radical elements’ (McDonald, 1977). The Congress was predisposed more favourably to the latter than the former. In Bihar the ‘credibility’ of the *Tenancy Act* was considerably undermined when the Congress submitted to landlord pressures at every stage of the legislation (Damodaran, 1984), which prompted Sinha to remark appreciatively:

the Government in Bihar ... were very reasonable and some concessions were secured by *Zamindars* in Bihar which no other Government would have allowed [Das, 1983: 158].

In this context, Rajendra Prasad’s advice to the Bihar peasants is worth quoting:

‘The Kisans should maintain those relations with their landlords which were in existence. They should not create any friction with the landlords. [Das, 1983: 146.]

Sardar Patel went a step further when he warned in April 1938:

We do not want a Lenin here ... Those who preach class hatred are enemies of the country. [Pandey, 1988: 129.]

The Bihar government imitated the Raj in undertaking a vilification crusade against popular Kisan Sabha activists, and Congressmen in such ‘trouble-prone’ districts as Saran were instructed to shun all association with them. In the United Provinces too, there was, throughout the ‘30s, ‘a steady movement towards Congress by landlord elements’ (Reeves, 1988). The Madras government of Rajagopalachari likewise did not hesitate to prosecute such prominent Socialist leaders as Yusuf Meherally and S. S. Batliwala (Chandra *et al.*, 1990). K. M. Munshi, the Bombay Home Minister, followed the British practice

of using the Criminal Investigation Department against communists and other leftist political agitators (Chandra *et al.*, 1990).

The Ministry period coincided with an upswing in labour militancy: a 158 per cent rise in strikes and lockouts; a 131 per cent increase in the number of strikers; and a 230 per cent upward swing in the curve of working days lost (Karnik, 1967). The Congress government, however, sought to tackle this situation not by supporting labour against capital but 'by a system of government-sponsored arbitration' (Damodaran, 1984), a strategy which found its best reflection in the Bombay government's *Industrial Disputes Act* of November 1938.

Strikes or demonstrations in Bombay were met with police brutality (Kudaisya, 1984; Chandra *et al.*, 1990). The Madras government pursued a 'policy of internal settlement' (Chandra *et al.*, 1990), even if it meant accommodating employers' interests. A case-study of the labour dispute in the Tata Iron & Steel Company demonstrates how the Bihar ministry's policy of 'compromise and restraint' remained silent on the 'company misdeeds' but emphasized 'maintenance of discipline in the works' (Damodaran, 1984). The Uttar Pradesh government employed section 144 of the *Criminal Procedure Code*—the very law introduced by the Raj for counteracting nationalist agitations—to imprison Kanpur labour leaders (Chandra *et al.*, 1990). At the behest of the Congress High Command, a new organization—the Hindusthan Mazdoor Sabha—was established in 1938 to counteract non-Congress and Leftist influence on the trade union movement. These moves were intended to assure the indigenous capitalist protection 'from an assertive labour force' (Damodaran, 1984: 228).

Neither the peasant nor industrial unrest mentioned above developed, essentially, as a counter to the Congress party. But faced with often uncalled-for Congress hostility, it tended to develop a strong affinity with the emergent Left alternative. Dutt was not too wide of the mark when he remarked:

The dominant moderate leadership in effective control of the Congress machinery and of the Ministries was in practice developing an increasing cooperation with imperialism ... [and] acting more and more openly in the interests of the upper class landlords and industrialists, and was showing an increasingly marked hostility to all militant expression of forms of mass struggle ... Hence a new crisis of national movement began to develop. [Dutt, 1979: 530.]

Inside Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru privately expressed his unhappiness at the way the Congress governments dealt with popular protest. On 28 April 1938 he wrote to Gandhi:

I feel strongly that the Congress ministries are ... adapting themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it ... we are losing the

high position that we have built up ... in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians who have no principles to stand by and whose work is governed by a day to day opportunism. [Nehru, 1988: 283–4.]

On another occasion Nehru noted:

The Congress has now attracted into its fold thousands who are not eager for achieving *Swaraj* or to join the fight, but are merely seeking personal gains ... Congress has lost the ... opportunity of action, of fighting imperialism directly and thus of deriving more strength [Gopal, Ed., 1976: 393].

Such confessions, however, made little institutional impact on the party, since Nehru and his group refused to make public their critique of the Congress governments under the pretext that 'We cannot agitate against ourselves' (Chandra *et al.*, 1990: 337). He even cast aspersions on such Kisan Sabha leaders as Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, remarking:

We find today all manner of strange people, who have never had anything to do with the peasantry before, talking in terms of programmes of trying in their uncouth way to woo the peasantry. Even political reactionaries of the deepest dye discuss unctuously agrarian programmes. [Das, 1983: 152.]

Furthermore, Nehru did not dispute the All India Congress Committee resolution of September 1938, which warned those who 'have been found in the name of civil liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means' (Chandra *et al.*, 1990: 337). This was presumably in order to provide organizational sanction for the use of state force by Congress governments against protest politics. In fact, by 1938 the Right inside the Congress noted with some satisfaction:

Jawaharlalji has been veering around to our view and the differences which used to be so marked between his viewpoint and ours on many points is less prominent today [Prasad, 1937].

Patel was more candid when he wrote to Gandhi:

He [Nehru] has done wonderful work, and has been burning the candle at both ends. We found not the slightest difficulty in cooperating with him and adjusting ourselves in cooperating with him and adjusting to his views ... [AICC Papers, 1936.]

The stage was being set for Nehru to become the epitome of centrist leadership of a Right-dominated post-1947 Indian National Congress.

The Congress Government in Independent India: continuity or change?

Despite certain obvious outward changes in forms of governance, or

employment of new political hyperboles, the Indian government under Jawaharlal Nehru represented, in many respects, a continuation of British attitudes, both in form and substance. Alavi has shown that, as in other post-colonial regimes, the Indian state was 'over-developed' (Alavi, 1972). The British Raj had reared a repressive state apparatus which exceeded the needs of an 'underdeveloped and poor post-colonial state'. The Congress government, after 1947, unfortunately chose not to 'develop an alternative state structure', but to maintain the police and para-military organizations inherited from the British (Shepperdson and Simmons, 1988: 15). As Bettelheim contends, the administrative system in independent India

was renewed without being remodelled, thus retaining many of the colonial system's imperfections' [Bettelheim, 1968: 116].

'The Indian people were, thus, 'confronted with the same civil servants, the same policemen who treat them with the same scorn and brutality as under British rule'. N K Bose, by no means a leftist critic of the Indian polity, summarized the situation in the late 1950's:

... by virtue of the circumstances of peaceful transfer of power, the Congress inherited an administrative structure which it tried to use for a new purpose. Its idea became not to disrupt the *status quo*, but to build up its 'socialistic pattern' of economy on the foundation of the existing order without a violent disturbance. In this prosaic task of reformation, the Congress party ... had tried to convert every problem of national reconstruction into an administrative problem ... The identification of the Congress with the *status quo*, even if the ultimate intention may be of using it as a spring-board for reform ... has made the organization unpopular ... The loss of ethical quality in the contemporary endeavours of the Congress in the reorganization of its party machinery, or in the matter of running an old administrative machinery without sufficient proof of desire or capability of reforming the latter, has created a kind of frustration, and even of cynicism amongst those who had made the attainment of political freedom synonymous with the advent of social revolution or moral regeneration. [Bose, 1958: 27-8].

The Congress relationship with police and military signified a shift from ostensible antagonism until 1947 to increasing interdependence ... in the post-colonial period (Arnold, 1986, 1988). Between 1949 and 1950 the Congress government in Delhi used about 12,000 armed police personnel to curb the Telangana peasant uprising; in the first decade of Independence, as many as 800 recorded deaths resulted directly from police actions; the police expenditure of the Indian government increased from Rs 9 million in 1951-2 to Rs 800 million

in 1970–1; the army assisted the civil authorities to restore order on 476 occasions between 1961 and 1970, and on 350 occasions between 1980 and 1983 (Shepperdson and Simmons, 1988: 16).

The strength of the Right within the Congress was also reflected in the Nehru government's economic policy. In the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, Nehru opted for a 'socialistic' and not a 'socialist' pattern of society, despite his 'leftist' pretensions. A panacea was found in the Five Year Plans and in a mixed economy. What actually followed was 'a move towards state capitalism' with considerable participation by the private sector.

Table 9.1 demonstrates the importance of the private sector during Nehru's stewardship of the country:

Table 9.1

(Crores of rupees at current prices; 1 crore = 10 million)

	First Five Year Plan	Second Five Year Plan
Public	55	938
Private	283	850

SOURCE: Chaudhuri, 1975: 160.

According to one estimate, about nine-tenths of the total domestic product came from the private sector at the close of the *Third Five Year Plan* period, while the public sector's share increased by only 4 per cent in fifteen years (Chaudhuri, 1975: 161). In terms of the relative contribution to the National Income, the picture was similar: the private sector's contribution ranged between 90 per cent in 1950–1 and 85 per cent in 1960–1, while the public sector's ratio increased from 7.4 per cent in 1950–1 to only 10.7 per cent in 1960–1.

The few top business houses with a strong communal and regional character—20 according to the Mahalanobis estimate (GOI, 1964) and 75 according to the *Monopolies Inquiry Commission Report* of 1965—retained a controlling voice in the economy; the public sector failed to meet its designated goals of self-sufficiency and balanced economic development (Bagchi, 1982). Besides, the foreign capital transactions throughout this period had been considerable: the volume of direct foreign investment rose from Rs 2,176 million in

1948 to Rs 6,185 million in 1964, and the share of foreign companies in gross profits of the Indian corporate sector increased from 29.8 per cent in 1959–60 to 33.3 per cent in 1962–3 (Chandra, 1977; Shirokov, 1973).

Indeed, state capitalism, as it developed in India, received the tacit approval of leading indigenous industrialists. As early as 1944, Birla, Tata, Shroff, and Mathai had formulated the Bombay Plan, which was similar to the 1951 draft outline of the *First Five Year Plan*. The Indian bourgeoisie rapidly carved out its own niche within the Congress. Not surprisingly, subsidies for the party's organizational work were forthcoming from all major business houses. In 1957–8 alone, the Tata Electric Company had contributed Rs 300,000 to the Congress party's coffer.

The industrialists also supported the Congress liberally in times of national and provincial elections. During the 1962 poll—the last to be held under Nehru's premiership—the three highest declared donations to the Congress were from the Tata and Birla groups (Rs 1.0 million each) and a cement company (Rs 500,000) (Rosen, 1967: 85). Financial connections between the Congress and Indian industrialists were such that the latter were not at all apprehensive of Nehru's socialist jargon and, in 1956, Birla is on record as having expressed his agreement with Congress's socialistic ideals (Bettleheim, 1968: 131). Six years later and two years before Nehru's death, Kilachand, the spokesperson of the Indian bourgeoisie, announced more confidently:

The business community is in complete agreement with the socialistic objectives of the government and there are no two opinions on that score. There is no fundamental or ideological difference between the business community and the government. [Chaudhuri, 1975: 157.]

There is an opinion that conservative sections within the Congress prevented Nehru from pushing through many of his socialistic schemes. But one wonders how committed Nehru was to the leftist cause. Perhaps he was more interested in preserving the unity of the party by adopting a centrist posture. After all, the Congress ideology, from its inception, aimed at harmonizing the conflicting interests of classes and groups. An inevitable upshot of this approach of compromise was a substantial rise in the absolute number of people below the poverty line, accompanied by a high degree of concentration of wealth.

There are reasons to fear that the number of people living in abject poverty by the turn of the century will exceed the total population of the country at the time of Independence (Maddison, 1970; Raychaudhuri, 1985; Krishna, 1983). Nehru's middle-of-the-road

economic policy has much to answer for on this issue. Dreams of better standards of living for the common multitude in independent India are far from being fulfilled.

The element of continuity between the British Raj and Nehru's government was ensured by the sustenance of a conservative lobby within the Congress party, which had maintained its prominence throughout the nationalist struggle. A particular method of decision-making within the Congress—the reliance on consensus—helped the Right to continue its stranglehold on the party. With a 3:1 ratio in favour of the Patel-led conservatives in the Congress Working Committee from the mid-'50s onwards, the *modus operandi* of consensus proved to be propitious for the maintenance of the status quo. What followed was a 'sort of democratic centralism' where the right wing could make its weight felt, while the 'left' minority had to be satisfied with concessions. Thus, while Nehru adopted an anti-capitalist and anti-landlord stance in his public pronouncements, he refrained from incorporating such sentiments in the party's election manifesto and restricted himself to such vague assurances as the lowering of land rents. Similarly, when his eulogy of socialism in election speeches invited the wrath of the business community, he hastened to clarify his position by insisting that his mention of socialism was only 'incidental' (Ray, 1988). Compromise with the Right for the sake of consensus remained the persistent trait in Nehru's political life as the first Prime Minister of independent India.

A particular shift in power within the Congress, a shift from urban and intellectual groups to a new rural/urban mix of medium-sized landowning dominant castes, cultivating owners and superior tenantry, small town middle and upper middle-classes of larger cities—especially the new industrial and commercial classes—further buttressed this conservative weight (Rosen, 1967; Brass and Robinson, 1989; Weiner, 1959; Mayer 1961; Bailey, 1963; Bêteille, 1963). Besides, the hegemony of the Right within the Congress High Command was sought to be guaranteed by a systematic marginalization of dissent.

The manner in which the Socialists under Acharya Narendra Dev were forced to secede from the parent body in 1948 is a case in point. When the Socialists, following their resignations from the Congress, surrendered their seats in the Uttar Pradesh legislature, and sought re-election, the Congress mobilized its new 'electoral machinery and patronage resources' to defeat all thirteen Socialist candidates, and prove the 'political wilderness' of the opposition (Brass and Robinson, 1989). This trend of exploiting official power to dismember the opposition was carried to its perfection by none other than Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, with disastrous consequences for Indian democracy. The Congress no longer symbolized national aspiration in

its widest sense, but became a party 'representing its members and those who voted for it' (Rosen, 1967: 69).

The party and government: from an uneasy relationship to governmental supremacy

Another aspect of the post-independence Congress politics affecting the process of nation-building was the way in which the relationship between the party and government was resolved. A party-government contradiction can be traced back to 1946 when Nehru—on being appointed the leader of the Interim Government—had to surrender the Congress presidency. Acharya J.B. Kripalani, the new Congress President, demanded that all important pronouncements by Congress members of the Interim Government be subjected to prior ratification by the Congress President and the Working Committee—perhaps because of his close links with the Congress central office. On the other hand, Nehru, acutely conscious of the 'coordinating and leadership' roles of a Prime Minister in a cabinet government, favoured a limited role for the party. The Nehru-Kripalani differences reached a crisis when the latter publicly disapproved of the government's 'timidity' towards Pakistan, advocated an economic blockade of Kashmir, and demanded revocation of 'standstill agreements' with the Nizam of Hyderabad (Rosen, 1967). Such overt reprobation of government policy presaged Kripalani's resignation from the Congress presidency in November 1947. In a moving speech before the All India Congress Committee (AICC) delegates, he thus recapitulated the ideological content of his stand against the government's supremacy over the party:

If there is no free and full co-operation between the Government and the Congress organization, the result is misunderstanding and confusion, such as is prevalent today in the ranks of the Congress and in the minds of the people. Nor can the Congress serve as a living and effective link between the Government and the people unless the leadership in the Government and in the Congress work in closest harmony. It is the party which is in constant touch with the people in villages and in towns and reflects changes in their will and temper. It is the party from which the Government of the day derives its power. Any action which weakens the organization of the party or lowers its prestige in the eyes of the people must sooner or later undermine the position of the Government [AICC, 1947: 11–12.]

Judged by hindsight, the exit of Kripalani constituted a foretaste of the future. Rajendra Prasad, his interim successor, rendered an indispensable service to Nehru by neutralizing the Party's challenge to its

parliamentary wing. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the next President, accepted the restricted role of the Party in his presidential address before the Jaipur session of the Congress as follows:

A Government must govern and is therefore concerned with the problems of the day, and with the passions of the hour. Its work is concrete, its solutions must be immediate ... The Congress is really the Philosopher while the Government is the Politician ... That is why the Government of the day requires the aid of unencumbered thinking. [Sitaramayya, 1948: 48–50.]

The bid to retain the supremacy of the organizational wing of the Party was revived in August 1950 when Purushottam Das. Tandon won the presidential election, despite Nehru's covert opposition. This was the time when India was confronted with political *turbulence* caused by communal violence in East Pakistan and an influx of Hindu refugees into West Bengal; factors which strengthened Hindu conservative forces inside the Congress. Driven by a fear that the new party President might infringe upon governmental prerogatives, Nehru created a crisis by resigning from the Working Committee on the pretext that Tandon had alienated nationalist Muslims such as Kidwai. The consequence that followed was preordained: Tandon's forced resignation and his replacement by Nehru in September 1951. This episode more or less ended the party/Government struggle and confirmed the primacy of the Prime Minister in the Indian polity.

Viewed from a historical perspective, this trend of replacing a potentially recalcitrant president by a more 'manageable' one (evidenced initially after the Tripuri Congress and replicated in Kripalani's resignation in 1947 and Tandon's exit in 1951) foreshadowed the growth of the dynastic cult of the Nehru/Gandhi family, which provided a spurious stability to the Indian polity in post-Independence India. Nehru saw to it that each of the Congress presidents after 1954—Dhebar (1954–9), Indira Gandhi (1959–60), Reddy (1960–2), and Sanjivayya (1962–4)—belonged to the 'secondary generation' of Congressmen, who were not yet distinguished enough to question the Prime Minister. The new line of Congress Presidents readily accepted the subordinate position. Dhebar thus noted that:

It is a mistake to consider that there is a dual leadership in the country. India, for the last forty years, has been accustomed to think in terms of a single leadership and by the grace of God, we have been endowed with men who had borne the brunt out of consideration or service to the country singularly well. There is only one leader in India today and that is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Whether he carries the mantle of Congress Presidentship on his shoulders or not, ultimately, the whole country looks to him for support and guidance. [Kochanek, 1968: 61.]

From such eulogies of Nehru's supreme leadership, the authoritarian

slogan of 'One Nation, One Leader' of the Emergency days was but a short step.

It is true that towards the end of Nehru's career in August 1963, an attempt was made to enhance the party's influence over the government through what came to be known as 'the Kamaraj Plan'. The idea was to revert government ministers to party positions after a certain tenure. Nehru sympathized with the theory but put very little weight behind its implementation. Instead, he allegedly used the Kamaraj Plan, according to Desai, to remove all possible contenders 'from the path of his daughter, Indira Gandhi' (Nayar, 1969). The Kamaraj Plan created a new dispossessed group within the Congress who had been deprived of their ministerial positions. This increased intra-party factional squabbles. The spirit of the Kamaraj Plan was thus lost.

During this period of party/government conflict, a contradiction between theory and practice was manifested in Nehru's political disclosure, which left a deep impact on the country's emerging political system. Nehru had agreed in principle 'with our friends and comrades ... who have objected to the high offices of Prime Minister and Congress President being held by one and the same person'. But when he was offered the Congress Presidency once in 1951 and again in 1953, he accepted it on supposed grounds of having 'no alternative'. In his Presidential address before the 58th session of the Congress, Nehru thus placed the onus on his party colleagues and the emergent political situation:

I am here at your bidding ... And yet, I feel a little unhappy once again as Congress President ... I tried hard that this should not occur and pleaded with my comrades ... to make some other choice, but their insistence and the circumstances were against me in this matter. I felt that for me to go on saying 'No' in spite of the advice of so many of my valued colleagues, would not be proper. [Nehru, 1953: 1.]

But the political crisis which led to Nehru's assumption of the dual responsibility of the country's premiership and Congress leadership, largely resulted from a perceived threat to the maintenance of his unquestioned political supremacy. Nehru's concern was more with power politics than with ideological rigidity.

The same lesson was driven home when Indira Gandhi was 'unanimously' elected as Congress President in 1959. Nehru reportedly expressed 'surprise' initially at the idea, remarking:

I gave a good deal of thought to this matter and I came to the conclusion that I should firmly keep apart from this business and not try to influence it in any way except rather generally and broadly to say that it had disadvantages ... it is not a good thing for my daughter to come in as Congress President when I am Prime Minister. [*Times of India* (Delhi), 8 Feb. 1959.]

Yet he never vetoed the proposal, knowing full well that no-one could

be chosen as Congress President without his explicit concurrence. Perhaps Nehru thought it more expedient to ensure a convergence between the offices of Prime Minister and Congress President, rather than to uphold a pious theoretical premises. Seeds of the future 'dynastic democracy' had begun to sprout.

Nevertheless, the triumph of Nehru's centralism was not total, even among the Prime Minister's close followers. During the last days as a party president, Dhebar, for instance, had expressed uneasiness at the increasing 'bossism' of 'governmental leaders in party matters' (Kochanek, 1968: 65). He even criticized Nehru publicly for intolerance of 'party criticism'. Reddy went a step further by commenting, with regret, that, as Congress President, he was treated 'as Mrs Gandhi's *chaprasi*' (Brecher, 1966: 131), thus hinting that the issue was related not only to Nehru's personal supremacy but also to dynastic dominance. It needs, however, to be stressed that this cleavage between the organizational and governmental wings of the Congress was common to most parties assuming power following decolonization with no experience of a telescoping of political and social revolutions. Sukarno of Indonesia, Nasser of Egypt, Kenyatta of Kenya—all sought centralization of authority or personal dictatorships, causing erosion of the efficacy of their respective political parties.

Victory of political centralism

The political system that developed under Nehru had a particular duality. On the one hand, the country experienced a broad spectrum of political formations. On the other hand, the establishment of Congress hegemony resulted in a one-party political order. The Congress party won impressive 'majorities in each parliamentary election and maintained organizational strength outside legislatures; the opposition groups, except the communists and Jana Sangh (now the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)) were mostly formed by rebels from the Congress itself, many of whom either rejoined the parent body or became champions of local interests. The opposition groups failed to present a united national front against Nehru, thus enabling the Congress to win 60–80 per cent of parliamentary seats without winning 50 per cent of the votes cast. The Congress dominance came to coexist with 'competition but without a trace of alternation' (Morris-Jones, 1978).

Social scientists have long questioned the ability of the Congress to establish its hegemony over the political space of post-independent India. Some have argued that social complexities and ambiguities

prevented the growth of sufficient class polarizations and other contradictions that could 'fracture' an all-embracing alliance of interests represented in the Congress (Morris-Jones, 1978). Others connect the Congress success with its reliance on the spirit of conciliation, a traditionally revered value in Indian society (Weiner, 1964). But the most plausible clue to the strength of the Congress lay in its management skill: its ability to co-opt discontented social groups through the maintenance of democratic rites and a display of concern for minorities and backward communities (Kothari, 1967).

In recent years attempts have been made to dilute one-party domination. It has been argued that the 'pervasive factionalism' and 'loose' institutional structure of the Congress presented

a functional equivalent of the leadership conflict, policy struggles and alternatives in power provided in most two or multi-party systems [Brass and Robinson, 1989: 3].

The Congress is posited as a 'highly desirable political franchise' in a 'developing electoral market' (Sisson, 1990). But in reality Nehru accepted opposition so long as it remained 'diffused and articulated within the orbit of the Congress System' (Dua, 1989: 357; Pvc, 1966). Each non-Congress provincial regime thus fell victim to the hegemony of the Congress party. Between 1952 and 1964 Nehru imposed President's Rule (a constitutional term for Central Rule) on federal units at least five times, either to dislodge non-Congress Chief Ministers (PEPSU, 1953; Kerala, 1959) or to offset the collapse of merger moves between the Congress and non-Congress groups (Andhra Pradesh, 1954; Kerala, 1956; Orissa, 1961). Indeed, Nehru's 1953 election slogan 'The Congress is the country and the country is the Congress' was imparted as embodying the national political spirit.

One-party domination thus distorted the functioning of Indian federalism. Undue political, administrative, and financial centralization under Congress guidance became the hallmark of the Indian polity.

The most important state leaders were attracted to the Centre, and the Centre had enough prestige to bring local party leaders and legislators into line [Rosen, 1967: 70].

State governors were inevitably 'hand-picked' by the Centre; efforts were always made to have 'malleable' Chief Ministers even at the cost of elevating personalities with no local base (as was the case with the installation, by Nehru, of Dr Katju in Madhya Pradesh in 1963). Such a centrist process, reminiscent of the Viceregal style, has been called 'the dominance of gubernatorial politics' (Mayer, 1987). The Planning Commission which formulated the *Five Year Plans*, the Finance Commission which allocated financial resources for the States, the

University Grants Commission which oversaw the higher education, the All-India Radio which ran the broadcasting network—all these were, and are still, controlled by the Central government. The Centre–State relation with its decisive tilt in favour of the former led to

distortions in the functioning of the constitution and concentration of all powers in the hands of the Centre, leading to inequalities in economic advance [Ranadive, 1989: 16].

Big business, urban professionals and bureaucracy—civil and military—provided the main social force behind this centralized political structure (Bardhan, 1988).

Undoubtedly, such unitary features bred ‘corrosive tensions’. Regional deprivations caused centrifugal tendencies,

their outbursts often taking the forms of sectarian violence and political anomie, which undermine the very basis of national unity that centralisation is supposed to achieve [Bardhan, 1988: 224].

In a multi-ethnic state, with uneven economic and political growth under a centrist bourgeois–landlord rule, any ethnic or linguistic dissension acquired an anti-Delhi character (De and Das, 1990). This has happened during many of the protest movements in India.

Conclusion: Retrospect and Prospect

It was feared that the ‘Most Dangerous Decades’ of the post-independence period would end with India splitting ‘into a number of totalitarian small nationalities’ (Harrison, 1960). Such concerns mirrored British colonial assessments:

there is not and never was an India, or even any country of India ... no Indian nation, no people of India [Strachey, 1903: 4].

The pattern of post-independent Indian politics has belied such pessimistic commentaries. India has survived as one nation, won acclaim as the world’s largest democracy, and experienced economic growth—far outstripping many other Third World countries. To a large extent, this success must be attributed to the Congress. But, equally, the Congress bears a heavy responsibility for certain negative facets of Indian federalism: suppression of opposition, which reached its full fruition during the Emergency, uneven political and economic growth, and a widening gap between rich and poor.

This chapter has re-examined the historical origins of this Congress *problematique*. The question of how to rid the country of its ills demands a separate analysis, involving a necessary re-structuring of socio-economic order, a reordering of Centre-State relations and the enrichment of a common Indian nationhood, based not on the much-trumpeted slogan of unity in diversity but on the alternative dictum of a diversity in unity. The substitution of Congress hegemony by political pluralism, as a result of the 1989 parliamentary elections, generated prospects for a re-invigorated India. But that expectation was betrayed. If, however, the struggle for political pluralism in India's federal policy is not continued, the cost in terms of national unity and integrity will be heavy indeed.

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On the Structure of Nationalist • 10 Discourse

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What is implied by putting the term 'discourse' in the title, the very initial statement of our problem? Does this mean simply a casually fashionable way of indicating nationalist ideas? Or do we, by the use of this term, indicate that our inquiry would be of some particular type, or attend to some special aspect of nationalist thinking? For this chapter to fit into the format of the volume and the project as a whole, some terminological questions should be sorted out first. In my argument, the term discourse would be used in a way that is slightly different from the manner in which it figures in Sathyamurthy's initial statement. This difference is not unbridgeable, but significant enough to call for some preliminary observations.

What is discourse? What kind of discourse?

To put it simply, the statement uses the term discourse in a general way, I intend to use it to emphasize structures of nationalist discourse (Sathyamurthy, 1989). A simply general way of using the term might

jeopardize what we can eventually get out of our exercise if it is carried out systematically. Does discourse mean all that is said by people in the actual political world—the mere totality of words, ideas, concepts, and more complex combinations of these like speeches, dispositions, programmes, rhetoric, ideologies, official documents—all of this without some discernible internal order; a totality that is as pointless as it is unencompassable? Politics is of course a world of words, but which words, which parts of these words and things made out of them are we trying to study in the analysis of discourse? Is it this totality? Is it an inner structure buried in it? Is it a conceptual grid which holds them together and sets limits to what can be thought and done through them?

Studies of discourse can turn to two different traditions of rigorous thinking about these questions. But the curiosities of these traditions go in distinctly different directions. The first of these is the tradition of structuralism of various types starting from structural linguistics which tries to separate out the differences between living speech, its effervescence, its contingency, its quick, dramatic life and death, and deeper underlying ordering forms which govern our ability to undertake such episodic speech through grammars ordinarily unavailable to common thinking.

These are deeper regularities—forms, constraints, limits—which make speaking, writing, thinking what they are without being interchangeable with them. Speakers implicitly obey constraints of grammar without being able to formulate its formal rules and exact restrictions. These rules form a structure, latent, constraining, unavailable to the ordinary user of language, and consequently recoverable by deliberate strategies of research. Foucault extended the existence of such grammars from natural language to conceptual and theoretical languages and would identify deep structural networks of exclusion, silence, various forms of unutterability constituting the vital frontier between what can be said inside a discourse and what cannot (Foucault, 1972: especially 46ff.).

Of equal distinction is a second tradition in which the study of discourse represents an object with just the opposite characteristics. To Volosinov (Bakhtin), equally interested in what can be done to the world through words and the subtle politics of representations, study of discourse means precisely living speech, the performance, the enactment with its circumstances and conditions, not the deep configurations which make them possible. In his work, the silent constraining existence of these deep configurations is not denied, but he is primarily interested in understanding how their classical lines are being constantly wrenched in different directions, and how the contingent but insistent demands of social life alter them historically.

For Volosinov, Saussurian structures can never fully explain or clarify why what is said is said. It can indicate what kinds of things in principle can be uttered under some structural conditions. It never shows how a particular speech came to be chosen out of those that are all structurally equally possible. Structure, in this sense, cannot explain history; though structuralists would answer—I think justifiably—that structures do not aim at explaining history in this sense. On this view, discourse study must try to capture precisely the irruption of linguistic phenomena, the individuality of living speech, expressions of experience, or poetically, the breath of life (Volosinov, 1986).

Schematically, we can isolate three ways in which the term discourse is used in political analysis. The first is a general use of the term which indicates that a body of ideas have a certain internal coherence both due to their linguistic meaning and external association with political events so that they are grouped together in history. These two ways of imparting coherence to ideas can loosely be called internal and external, the first a coherence imparted to them by their conceptual meanings, and the second by their act-meanings (or force, to use Austin's language). Both these aspects have to be gathered up in a Marxist conception of ideology.

Vulgar conceptions of ideology, using a simple dichotomy between a correct and a false consciousness, may not be able to incorporate such inflexions, but a more sophisticated rendering of the argument extending Volosinov's distinction between theme and meaning must move in that direction. Indeed, the purpose of the theory of ideology is precisely to insist that use-meanings and act-meanings go together in historical analysis. Inside this kind of a theory of ideology, we can then take recourse, when necessary, to the more rigorous distinctions made by the two types of discourse analysis.

In the analysis of nationalist discourse, it seems a more promising approach to search for simple versions of false consciousness. If there is any field about which nationalist thought establishes plausible but misleading narratives, it is about the society it tries to bring under its political control and its historical self-representation. But this narrative emerges in several distinct stages: it acquires a particular outline through its first skirmishes with colonialist ideology, and this narrative of the self bears a strong historical relation with the early growth of nationalist politics. After some time it has clearly crossed the threshold, and the initial narrative about the self is restructured in the Gandhian phase of Indian nationalism. Finally, there is a third stage, post-Independence, in which this narrative undergoes some significant changes associated with the demands of serving as an ideology of a new nation state. In this chapter I shall try to present a brief

account of this process of historical re-formations of the nationalist narrative.

If we take nationalism seriously as an ideological discourse, it is not adequate merely to say that it is a configuration of false but plausible beliefs. Each ideology arranges its falsity and plausibility in its own particular way. Thus, it becomes vacuous merely to assert its falsity. Its peculiar structure and form must be unravelled. Ideologies appear to have an intimate connection with history and its narrative construction, the persuasiveness with which historical constructions enable people to make sense of the complexities of the modern world. The power of modern ideologies depends often on its self-portrayal, its rendering of its own history.

The first step in developing the critique of any ideological discourse then must be to disbelieve its autobiography, the history it gives to itself (Chatterjee, 1986: 51). While dealing with Indian nationalism, Marxists often fail to make this primary move. It is more common to take for granted the history that nationalism has traditionally made familiar, only to contest its ideological evaluation at some crucial points. Thus, it is usual to agree that the Gandhi–Irwin pact was a crucial stage in the history of the nationalist movement, but to see it as a 'sell-out' to imperialism, rather than as an astute step of temporary retreat¹ (Dutt, 1970). Similarly, it is usual to write the story of the Congress in terms of the division between the moderates and extremists, but to see the moderates as social progressives (Roy, 1971). I am far from suggesting that these arguments and evaluations are wrong. But in order to understand nationalism better, we must transcend these descriptions internal to nationalist history, and attend to other things which have, for various reasons, not found a significant place in this history—other regularities, other structures, other resemblances.

Two questions are central to this enterprise: what is the discourse of nationalism? Secondly, what is the right way of going about understanding it? I assume that nationalist discourse refers to the intellectual process through which the conception of an Indian nation is gradually formed, the discourse that forms it, is in favour of it, and gives it historical shape. I shall try to indicate some major stages by which this imagining of the nation happens, treating it as contingent and historical, rupturing the absent-minded and long-practised continuities through which we customarily think about this. The right

¹ R.P. Dutt's *India Today* (1940) is a representative example of such alternative history. I think it is wrong to deny that this constituted an alternative historiography, but at the same time, this is not the only way or only valuable or sensible way of writing one. Indeed, any idea of a single alternative history which would replace all the evils, errors, biases, blindnesses of others is a suspect ideal, based on a simplistic understanding of the historicity of history writing.

way of understanding it, it seems, is not to follow its own telling of its story, but to surround it with other relatively neglected cultural processes which provide it with its historic preconditions (Guha, 1982-91).²

Initial responses

To modern students of colonialism, the early reception of ambitious European merchants in Indian society may appear puzzlingly positive. Indians who saw Europeans take the first steps towards colonial power did not respond with strong resentment, for reasons which are easily found. Traditional ruling groups, consisting of rajas and nawabs and their effete quarrelsome nobilities, could not conceive of an eventual British capture of their continental country. They saw them as transient enemies or allies, depending on how their loyalties were ranged, and since the British made it amply clear that their loyalty to Indian rulers was far from unchangeable, even present enemies felt the possibility of future use of these potentially powerful allies in what was bound to continue, in their view, to be a predominantly domestic scramble for political ascendancy.

Surely, they were not the only social group whose destiny was to be affected by colonialism. Lower orders of society were customarily far-removed from turmoil at the upper stratum of political authority, and looked at the rise and fall in the fortunes of their distant lords with indifference. Some other, primarily intermediary, groups responded to the Europeans' presence more positively, as it provided unforeseen avenues of advancement. To their intellectuals it provided, or seemed to promise, a historical opportunity of subjecting a traditional social order to criticism. For these groups the attraction was very strong indeed, precisely because it occasioned the happy merger of moral and material interests.

Early responses to European entry into India were, interestingly, dominated by political and cultural considerations, rather than basic economic ones. Much of the early thinking of Indians about colonialism centred less on the hard economics of exploitation, and more on the cultural 'meaning' of Europe. Europe meant different things to different generations of Indians who came into contact with its impressive power and glamorous modernity.

This was again due to two reasons. Europe was going through a period of unprecedented rapid change in its economy, political

² The work of the 'Subaltern Studies' group is significant because they have undertaken a task of this kind.

institutions, and culture, and kept offering a different countenance to the world which observed this new kind of society with wonder. Europe, before and after the Cromwellian revolution, before and after the French revolution, before and after Napoleon, before and after 1848, before and after the coming of socialism, before and after the unification of Germany, before and after the World War, and before and after Nazism could not either materially or symbolically appear the same.

These events appeared disorientating enough to those who experienced them in Europe, but they at least carried with them the consolation of historical immediacy. To Indians, wildly enthusiastic or denunciatory about that history, but less informed, unacquainted with the culture or politics which supplied these events with their internal causal logic, it must have appeared a bewildering illustration of de Tocqueville's dictum about modernity: a time when living is strenuous because 'the past had ceased to throw light upon the future' (de Tocqueville, 1974: 396–7).

But Indian reaction was limited or constrained not only because of its relative lack of information; Europe came to India predominantly through powerful rationalist narratives. Successful civilizations always construct myths about themselves. The European intellectuals' feeling that the meaning of modernity was still unclear, its processes still unmastered, its riddle unravelled, did not stand in the way of creation of ideological myths and their persuasive narratives. Ideological narratives simplify historical complexities of the growth of a civilization and force it into an accessible group of clichés. The first encounter of Indian intellectuals with Europe's history was through a mythical narrative of this kind—the great story of reason—conveyed to them through the curricula used in the institutions of new western education. In time, greater acquaintance with Europe's history served to destroy this classical ideological theory. The idea of Europe came to acquire much greater complexity and the narrative of European reason lost some of its stifling dominance.

In later nationalist thought, it was realized that trajectories of modernity differed from one part of Europe to another, and even after the stabilization of distinctly similar forms of modern social life all over Europe, serious dissimilarities persisted. French and British political institutions were recognizably different even at this distance, and gave rise to constantly renewed polemics between conservative and radical sections of European liberal opinion. Ideologically, Europe did not present a homogeneous picture either, contrary to the mythology of reason—a narrative which attempted to demonstrate the triumph of European rationality starting from ancient Greece, through Rome, down through the southern and northern renaissance

into a generalized modern rational life evenly shared by the inhabitants of this enlightened continent.

In the later discourse of Indian nationalism, this internal diversity of Europe, the several voices with which Europe spoke in history, was utilized to great polemic effect. Dissenting intellectual trends within European modernity, sometimes trends which dissented from modernity itself despairingly—especially romanticism, idealism and, later, socialism—found their way straight and easily into the nationalist's heart because of their different yet related contributions to a critique of the crystallizing discourse of bourgeois modernity. In his/her search for foundations and support, the nationalist, in a gesture of implicit internationalism, often turned to them.

Colonialism entered Indian society initially in stealthy steps, through misunderstandings and misconstruals. Indeed, before it took firm political root, the British were more concerned to conceal the extent of their success than to make a display of it, for fear of putting into effect a desperate and overwhelming opposition against the power of alien intruders. However, once it became stable, the colonial state came to acquire not only a particular economic structure and form but was also inextricably linked to some cultural processes.

Acts of the colonial establishment in India were poised between three different publics at the same time. Its actions had to make sense to a public at home exulting in the achievements of rationalistic modernity, including its military adventures in far-away foreign lands. Due to its demands, colonial administrations slowly had to change their policies of a minimal cultural strategy, keeping away from troublesome entanglements in processes of reform. Demands from a section of the native élite, which played on the distant but more compelling expectations of British public opinion, made such indifference untenable. It became, through a slow but irreversible process, an apparatus which set out on a large 'civilizing' process—of altering, restructuring, conquering the most difficult terrain of all—the culture of Indian society, the realm of the mind' (Deuskar, 1970).

When administrators from one culture face another, strange and incomprehensible, there is an understandable inclination to start from a presumption of similarity, and gradually, through experience, work in perceptions of difference. This movement from similarity to difference remains always an imperfect and unconcluded process. Always, some parts of this project of de-familiarization remains unachieved or uncomprehended. Colonial rulers, when they under-

¹ Some early nationalists saw the cultural process as vital. Sakham Ganesh Deuskar, writing in Bengali, presented a popular version of the drain theory; but added to it a trenchant critique of colonial ideology and culture that was his own.

took reform, worked with a picture of the cultural structure of Indian society that was surreptitiously similar to the one in bourgeois Europe—a culture that was highly integrated after the success of bourgeois revolutions, which had a common core of moral, cognitive and social beliefs at their centre constituting a general, social ‘common sense’. This stock of beliefs mirrored the structure of society, and holding them made the business of undertaking social actions more internally consistent and particularly successful.

This core of beliefs was articulated and re-coordinated to contingent historical needs by a specialized intelligentsia, often by means of social theory. Evidently, the cultural organization of traditional Indian society was not like this in all respects, but colonial policy-makers assumed that it was. The colonial order followed what could be called a strategy of ‘Gramscianism’, assuming that if the structure of common sense beliefs of the directive classes in Indian society was altered, this would gradually lead to an alteration of the core common sense of the society as a whole.

Historically most remarkable was the mixture of success and failure encountered by this cultural strategy of colonialism, and its long-term unintended consequences. Eventually, the colonial establishment was able to alter the entire conceptual apparatus of a significant crust of the Indian élite, especially the new élite that had come into being through the colonial process itself. Given the model of unified European societies, through the general laicization of knowledge, these groups, by virtue of their constituting the intellectual élite, should have performed the function of being the creators, shapers, repositories, communicators of its commonsense.

However, the unqualified successes of the colonial educational process made this impossible. It created a new élite without much historical continuity with traditional social groups which had earlier performed these functions. Indeed, their cultural transformation was so drastic and complete that it turned around what may be called, in Dilthey’s (1974: 171 and 231) well-known phrase, the ‘historical *a priori*’ of their thinking about society and history and the basic register of identification of social objects themselves.

A most vital part of this cultural transformation consisted of the alteration of their historical aspirations; in other words, given their new way of thinking, the new élite came to be covetous of the history of the West, along with its prosperity, technical control, and political power. However, the very success of the colonial enterprise made the fulfilment of its other, related objective less likely. The more British cultural policy was successful in transforming the conceptual alphabet of this group, the farther it was removed from its deeper historical objective of fashioning a new common sense for the entire Indian

society through their intermediation. The more the British persuaded them, the less their collective ability to persuade the rest of the Indian society. This frustrated the plan of making the Indian people, through their intellectual dominance, see the social world in a manner that would make colonialism appear largely as a benign institution—an altruistic enterprise in the spread of enlightenment.

Acquisition of this alphabet of thought made this class gradually share its language, common presuppositions, theories, prejudices, and inclinations with the western intelligentsia and colonial administrators; but it also broke off, in a matter of a single century, any links it may have had with their own society's popular discourse. The consequence of this diremption in Indian culture is immediately reflected in the history of protests against British rule.

The insurrection of 1857, despite its traditional élite leadership, contained ideological motifs, organizational principles, social norms, and political slogans that were more genuinely, traditionally common between different social groups. It could thus create, however transiently, a bond between traditional élites and the rebellious peasant-soldiery of the Company. Afterwards, grievances against British rule certainly did not disappear, but the discontent of the upper and lower orders lost a common language, forcing middle-class discontent to turn into a mendicant constitutionalism of the early Congress and the resentfulness of the subaltern classes into occasional, blind, local outbursts. Both types of disorders were much easier for British authorities to contend with, a serious threat having to wait until their reconnection after the arrival of Gandhi.

Early anti-colonialism

The entry of colonialism, I have argued elsewhere, not only introduced a set of unfamiliar new institutions into Indian society, but also a set of discourses on which the functioning of these institutions depended. Although the new middle class had enthusiastically accepted its alphabet, it would be wrong to argue that these altered only *their* social world. The social world was decisively restructured for *all* groups and social classes, irrespective of whether they accepted it, liked it, or underwent a training in using this discourse of colonial rationalism. Even those left out of this crucial education, or those who sought to resist its advent, were obliged to live in a world which was transformed in fundamental ways.

There is a strong temptation to think theoretically about this transition through the distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*

which Toennies used to analyse the rise of European modernity. What happened in India does not seem to fit easily into the 'Töennies framework.⁴ The transition appears to have been from one type of community to another, rather than to an unqualified form of *gesellschaft*. In traditional society, people did have a strong sense of living in *gemeinschaft* organizations. But the colonial drive towards a truncated and distorted modernity does not force people to change their life into unambiguously *gesellschaft*-like associations. They move from a fuzzy conception of community to one of an enumerated kind.⁵

The lived world of society was traditionally marked by the sense of community, an unexplicated, pre-reflexive sense of belonging to collectivities which produced the individuals who lived in them, unlike the modernist conception of pre-existing individuals producing collective entities. This traditional community sense was fuzzy in two ways. First, because, in a variety of instances of social exchange, persons would have chosen different types of senses of belonging in order to give themselves a social face. An individual, when asked to define who s/he was, could have mentioned his/her village, his/her region, religious denomination, caste. There was also the territorial boundary of the kingdom, though these must have been the least determinate because so heavily prone to fluctuation.

Among these identities some are territorial (village, kingdom, region), though territoriality could be of different sorts (Fox, 1977). Others are clearly non-territorial. What is central in this configuration of identities available is that a traditional person would not have been under such pressure to clarify the identity-structure in terms of which s/he lived. They would not accord to these identities a clear hierarchy: these would be ranged in a line out of which s/he would pick out the right one as the occasion demanded. The arrangement of identities is fuzzy in the sense of being indeterminate in rank order; though, paradoxically, this allows for greater precision and flexibility in the social identification of persons, and is more complex than the modern unidimensional assertion of a national tag.⁶

There is a second sense in which communities are fuzzy. Some of these communities do not have clear territorial boundaries, or a map in the way modern societies must have. It is a world of a much finer,

⁴ In much of the discussion about modernizing initiatives and consequences of colonialism, the dichotomy between traditional and modern is automatically joined to the opposition between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* derived from Toennies.

⁵ The following section restates a distinction I have used in Kaviraj (forthcoming).

⁶ My use of the term 'fuzzy' is not meant to indicate imprecision, only a different way of being precise. Although the argument is quite different from my own, see Bose (1989) for an analysis of the complexity of identity ordering in India.

graded, and more complex organization of difference, much like the way one tone of colour would shade off into another in a spectrum. The best illustration of this can be that of the history of formation of linguistic communities, one of the identities with which the identity of the nation must later compete for loyalty and space.

Indian society had traditionally, due to the caste system, known a dual system of high and low language. The structure of its speech communities would have had something like the following form.⁷

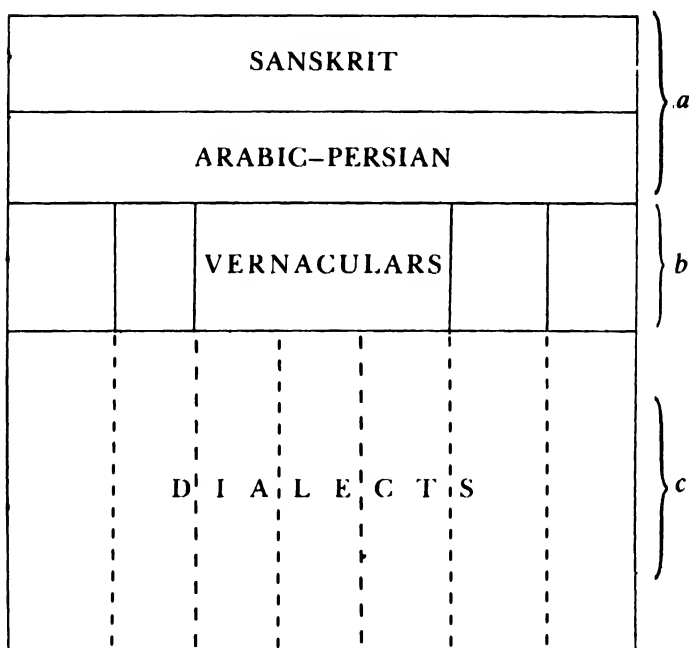


Fig. 10.1

(Note: While those who had *c* had only *c*, users of *b* could use *bc*; and correspondingly, users of *a* had *abc*, though, obviously, those who knew Sanskrit did not necessarily know Arabic-Persian and *vice versa*.)

⁷ The diagram in its basic design is based on argument similar to the argument about agrarian societies in Gellner (1983).

It will be noticed that such a structure is not extraordinary: it is, indeed, exactly similar to the structure of agrarian societies outlined in Gellner's studies. A small, spatially dispersed but more tightly knit and self-recognizing élite can keep under its control the horizontally segmented masses of the ordinary people. This was certainly true of the superior caste-for-itself character of the Brahmins, as opposed to the other more deeply segmented castes.

Thus we have to modify the usual segmentation thesis about Indian society; though all parts of society were segmented, they were not segmented in the same way, to the same extent, or with the same consequences. This principle of differential segmentation was reflected still more intensely at the level of spoken language where language shows its universality. At the lowest level, then, language communities were speech communities of dialects confined to small areas, and heightened a feeling of a pre-critical identity among its native speakers. To fit this picture of difference between neighbouring dialects into a modern map would be difficult. Modern maps would require clear boundaries and thresholds. In this picture one dialect would gently and imperceptibly shade off into the next. Thus, even though the region now called Bengal might speak dialects belonging to a single family, and thus related to each other, at the edges of this region, in Medinipur or Mithila, the dialect would not be demonstrably different from the neighbouring speech of Orissa or Bihar.

Into this world of gradual difference, new forces were released by the entry of colonialism. Emergence of dominant economic and social élites, which enjoyed the circumstantial gift of the colonizers' partiality, created 'natural' norm-setting communities in particular regions. The dialect spoken around the once unknown hamlet of Calcutta, formerly without any particular claim to literary eminence or aural melody, suddenly emerges as the indispensable vehicle of a high Bengali literary culture.* As the power of this élite became more entrenched along with their colonial patrons, and the coming of the printing press, its pre-eminence was soon inscribed on the language, through the general acceptance by regional Bengali élites of its grammatical and syntactical foibles and subsequently through imitation of pronunciation. Local élites of outlying regions, and Orissa and Bihar on the borders of Bengal, would start copying this language, initially for formal communication and writing, and later for oral exchange, in order to underline their membership of the élite grouping not only economically but also in terms of its styles of cultural self-identification.

* This process is sketched in somewhat greater detail in Kaviraj (1990).

This is particularly attractive for the new *bhadralok* élite, because it provides them with a constantly used social signifier which marks them off from the slovenly lower orders. Their claim to distinction cannot be mistaken the moment they open their mouths, and this process of linguistic refinement is carried to such excessive lengths that it would not be far wrong to say that the Bengalis are a people held together by the differences in their language. Through such processes of élite homogenization, it becomes possible, after about a century, to draw a modern linear boundary between regions, because similar processes are also at work on the other side.⁹ While, in the sixteenth century, it might be impossible to tell the difference in dialect between neighbouring villages, by the mid-nineteenth century it becomes possible to say that two villages belong to two different speech communities, and that this determines their political, economic, and cultural demands; rights, and aspirations. It must be recognized, however, that at lower levels of the social order the earlier system of spectrum-like difference might still survive, and remain effective in everyday life.

What is the relation between this story, if credible, and the story of nationalist discourse? There are two significant connections. First, nationalist discourse is crucially connected with the political use of languages, and the relation between English and the vernaculars; mature mass nationalism invariably has to await the emergence of cultures of vernacular assertiveness. Second, there is also the vital question of what exactly should be the relation between the two strata of identities—the national (which in India does not have a linguistic marker) and the regional (which does). In one view, the absence of a spontaneous community with those speaking the same language, a major source of strength of nationalism in the European context, becomes a source of weakness in the Indian subcontinent.

The first implication emerging from this specificity in relation to India is that an idea often adopted by nationalists influenced by modernization theory has to be rejected. The conventional dichotomy between a recent, constructed, occasionally even rational, identity of the nation and the primordial, pre-existing identity of the region is undermined. It must be recognized that although in many parts of India vernacular languages may have originated as early as the tenth century, regional political identity centred on a language is a relatively recent phenomenon, derived largely from the same historical forces. To decide between the claims of the region and the nation is not to choose between a modern and a relatively ancient identity, but two configurations thrown up by the same historical process.¹⁰

⁹ For a discussion of the Oriya case, see Mohanty (1982).

¹⁰ The forms of religious identity commonly termed communalism in India are

Into the earlier world of fuzzy identities colonialism, especially its rationalist cognitive apparatus working most strikingly in administration and education, brings in an entirely new way of making sense of and acting practically in the world. The Census, initially planned in 1862, eventually carried through in 1872 (Barrier, 1981), is part of a process of an immense and irreversible enumeration of the social world; it creates a new world of maps, of boundary lines, divisions, of numbers and statistics, and a new technique of living in terms of these. Once this social ontology is firmly grounded in the main social practices of the state and dominant groups, its logic sinks into the everyday consciousness of the lower orders as well.

A second aspect of this change in social ontology also needs to be mentioned. Certainly all these new definitions require a certain cognitive apparatus disseminated by special educational and intellectual processes. The majority of Indian people remained unlettered, and therefore distant from this formidable apparatus. Yet, it would be fallacious to believe that because they had no secure control over these skills, their world remained unaffected by its consequences. Not to be able to count does not mean that people can remain immune from the processes of this fateful counting. To be illiterate does not mean remaining unaffected by new boundaries drawn upon the world by literate politics. Gramsci's theory points out graphically how illiteracy is a form of political resourcelessness, how, precisely because they are culturally deprived, poorer people are powerless against hegemonic processes and respond blindly to agendas set by others.¹¹

Today, an unlettered Muslim might not know exactly how many per cent of India's population belongs to his/her community, but s/he surely knows s/he is a member of a minority group and how to behave appropriately, what implications this has for his/her political rights. One implication of this modern world in which boundaries are clear, distances are measured, and populations are enumerated, a world grasped in numbers in every sense, is often missed in nationalist thought.¹² It is now not only the national community which is counted and feels invigorated by this statistic; so do all other potential communities—religions, castes, sects, languages.

All these identities, which can be candidates for political mobilization when associated with a sense of disadvantage and distress, can

modern identities of religion, and, therefore, products of the modern instead of the traditional world.

¹¹ I read Gramsci's conception of subalternity as indicating this complex mixture of a proneness to dissent and an inability to set agendas.

¹² Cohn (1987) contains a pioneering analysis of the social consequences of the Census.

now mobilize their knowledge of numbers, territorial distribution, social award of benefits, and make politically adroit uses of the display of the power of helplessness. There is no historical necessity which ensures that the nation wins out, the historical pronouncement of a certain identity—that of the nation—among all others is entirely dependent on the process of politico-cultural persuasion. Politics decide which arguments win and lose in the increasingly open and crowded marketplace of ideas about identities.

It is thus not a matter of inner necessity, but political contingencies and some luck that it was eventually a largely, vaguely, idealistically, and optimistically secular identity which came to represent the identity of the Indian nation. It was a fragile achievement, fortunate for some. But this was not the end result of a linear and simple process. However, there are two current narratives through which nationalism presents itself to its adherents.

The first, which is both simple and linear, works with a minimal definition of 'nationalism (based on the ideas of those who opposed the British) and assimilates the most diverse strands of thought and activity into this concept. Tipu Sultan, Nana Fadnavis, the Rani of Jhansi, Mir Kasim, and Gandhi and Nehru are treated together as coming under the same broad trend of anti-imperialism. Incongruously, this would also include figures such as Raja Ram Mohun Roy, who never wished the British empire ill, to form an impressive but also misleading pageant.¹³

More recently, a second narrative has gained currency which would simply deploy a criterion of the Nehru brand of nationalism and exclude from the title 'nationalist' all those who failed to fulfil its retrospective demands (e.g. Chandra *et al.*, 1988). A surprisingly large number of nationalist figures would fail the test if it were to be stringently administered; besides, it would also produce a misleadingly benevolent picture of what Indian nationalism in reality was. Its drawbacks are twofold. First, this view romanticizes Indian nationalism by neglecting the power of strong religious, occasionally communal, sentiments that often worked in its favour, even within the Congress. Second, it gives us a false picture of the past, and would have us believe that all forces of nationalism were in favour of a secular state¹⁴ (Chatterjee, 1965). This will grossly underestimate the difficulties in the way of secularization of the state in modern India.¹⁵

¹³ Joshi (1975) contains some early contributions to a revisionist history of nationalism (see, especially, Sarkar 1975 and Sen, 1975).

¹⁴ The political intent behind this move is clear: this would take away any legitimacy that communal forces in present-day India can claim as inheritors of the Indian nationalist tradition.

¹⁵ Bankim Chandra's political essays furnish good examples on both these counts; he

To understand nationalism it is essential to break away from these narrative structures, but that is not easy because we have ourselves lived inside them, and they have, in large part, helped us constitute ourselves.

Formation of an anti-colonial consciousness

Of necessity, colonial ideology in its early phase underplayed the enormity of the political change taking place in India. This may or may not have been due to deliberate design or cunning. The process of establishment of British dominion over India was very uneven, and initially shaky. It depended vitally on preventing the cementing together of an overwhelming coalition against itself. A voluble ideology of colonialism under these circumstances would have been injurious to British interest.

The first steps taken by this colonial power were not accompanied by an overarching ideology of social reconstruction or historical 'improvement'; rather, British agents sought to create a misleading feeling of the everydayness of their efforts, so that they were seen as one unremarkable party among many others contending to advance their material interest in a fluid political situation. To the extent rationalist ideas played any part at this stage, it appears to have been limited merely to accentuating a sense of invincibility of British arms.

In deep isolation in such a varied and alien land, without hope of quick reinforcements, they liked to picture themselves, entirely understandably, as invincible warriors with guns in their hands and reason on their side. It was important to convince not only themselves but also their Indian adversaries and fickle friends. Even this attenuated version of occidental presence introduced a militarily conceived notion of superior modernist rationality. Several of the more successful Indian rulers, Tipu Sultan in the south and Ranjit Singh in the north, showed their acceptance of this idea by enlisting the skills of European gunnery, sometimes by employing European mercenaries despite their reputation for notorious undependability.

The theatres of war in early colonial India were at the same time theatres of ideological conflict, a constantly renewed and repeatedly lost battle against European reason in military uniform. The eventual failure of all opposition by native powers against British rule posed a basic historical question to thinking Indians: how does one explain

was much concerned with a critique of utilitarian ideas which he called 'the philosophy of the belly', and yet he agonized over the rights of indigenous tyrants and foreign reformers (Chatterjee, 1965: 54ff).

this failure—its persistence and finality? since, clearly, this was not a failure of individuals, but of an entire civilization. Was it to be consigned to an extraordinary series of military accidents? Or to some underlying historical necessity? In any case, how did Indians cope with the forces of modernity that Europe represented?

The answer came in two directly opposite forms. The first acknowledged the superiority of European arms, but extended this to the related superiority of principles of social organization. But, interestingly, adherents of this view refused to accept any racialist or historical essentialism which often went with this belief; in other words, there was something in the racial character of Europeans which made such feats possible but barred these to mere Indians.

The 'Young Bengal' movement, which saw such rationalist symbolism in food and dress, and found in forbidden meat not only good food but also evidence of philosophic rationalism, was one illustration of this line of thought. But Bengal also witnessed an understandably conservative reaction which wished to deploy against the British the strategy which, they believed, had worked against Muslim rulers of Hindu society—of secreting the operation of the basic social processes by raising barriers of orthodoxy. By intricate interdictions and prohibitions, they would draw their social practices away from the inchoately emerging arena of public law and open debate. The convention of open public discussion of the rationality of religious practices appeared to them a particularly threatening device exclusively meant to bring ridicule upon indigenous religion and to subvert them.

As colonialism grew more stable and the administration grew less anxious about the durability of the empire, the nature of the argument from the colonial side underwent rapid transformation. Colonial modernity was now pictured as an advanced social form, internally consistent, though occasionally flawed due to the hesitancy and cowardliness of colonial policies of social reform. Gradually, the justification of British power in India was taken over by arguments of distinctly utilitarian provenance.

Utilitarianism exercised a powerful appeal on the collaborative Indian intelligentsia for two related reasons. First, it offered in a schematic form the outline of a general rationalist theory of history; it allowed Indians and the British to have a common and discursible picture of historical evolution and a common language to dispute its intermediate hypotheses. It made collaboration easier, and at the same time made it appear not as collaboration. Within its rational frame, some answer could be sought to the great puzzle of Indian experience—what was happening in Indian history, going beyond the purely parochial accounts of glory or misfortunes of single dynasties or regions.

Utilitarianism offered a simple theory of transition. It saw the current historical process as progress, a unilinear, largely teleological movement of all societies towards technological modernity and attendant forms of social organization represented by nineteenth century Europe. Civilization was the common fate of all humanity; only some societies were able to devise these processes endogenously and others would have to undertake this enlightening journey under the tutelage of the pioneers. Utilitarian theory, thus, perfectly fitted the colonial setting.

Just as it undermined earlier prescriptivist theories in Europe, it similarly undermined the traditional title to rule of indigenous claimants of political power. Utilitarianism taught people to judge all such claims consequentially. The right to rule simply should accrue to those who would provide more of the benefits of modern civilization to larger numbers. By this logic, the claim of the British to political authority in India after providing it with stability, administrative unification, rational legal systems, modern education, and other material benefits of modern civilization, was clearly incontestable. No wonder some early nationalist thinkers spent a good deal of time disputing whether the right to rule of an enlightened foreign ruler was weaker than those of malignant indigenous tyrants. Many of them had to admit that the claim of simple indigenism was sentimental and unacceptable (Chatterjee, 1986).

By the '60s of the nineteenth century, the hitherto unproblematic dominance of utilitarian theory began to be challenged. Indeed, the original forms in which challenge was mounted were to be of indelible significance to the ways in which nationalist Indians, since then, have tried to come to terms with their history. This critique was mounted first by writers who are conventionally, unjustifiably in my view, characterized as conservatives.

To question the ideological conceits of British imperial authority against the tide of the times was hardly an unproblematically conservative attitude. Partly, of course, this is a problem of interpretative classification: this tendency to regard thinkers as conservatives, liberals, and radicals derives from the unthinking imitateness of both nationalist and some Marxist historiography. The practitioners of both these tendencies believed that they performed their classificatory obligations by finding the most perfunctory similarity between Indian and European currents of thought.

Since utilitarianism justified modernity, the critical argument maintained that it was possible to contest the moral validity of the claims to modernity's superiority over tradition, or of the organization of modern European over other social principles. This was not merely the other side of rationalism, as European romanticism was, which

shared a great deal of the deep structural elements of rationalist thought. It signified a deeper rejection—a combination of misunderstanding, apprehension, and rejection out of conviction, and in the late nineteenth century it required great intellectual courage to take this line against the easy triumphalism of colonial ideology, and the still flimsier rationalism of the job-seeking babus.

Without doubt, this ideological position was itself something of a complex mixture with individual inflexions on various themes. In acknowledging evident European superiority in the sphere of instrumental action and natural sciences based on it, these writers occasionally fell into the trap of Orientalism itself, accepting a stereotype unfavourable to themselves and trying unsuccessfully to make it work against its inner logic. Chatterjee (1986) has argued this position forcefully.

Intellectuals fashioned two different, yet complementary, arguments against the idea that colonial rule constituted a conferment of modern civilization. Authors such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, sensitive to the smallest inflexion in cultural processes, began to point towards an irremediable limitation of colonialism's modernizing impact.

What was going on in India was not just a slower, less complete process of modernization. Modernity consisted of two processes or trajectories, the first one proper to the metropolitan societies, and another appropriate for the colonies. There was an undeniable likeness between the two, but it was the resemblance between an original and its travesty.¹⁶ It was the Indian intellectuals' relative unfamiliarity with the details of European history which alone allowed social change under colonial rule to be passed off as a re-enactment of the Enlightenment and the bourgeois transformation of Europe's social life. Familiarity with European history made the travesty of the likeness apparent.

Cultural critiques of this type were supplemented, in subsequent decades, by indigenous applications of political economy to an understanding of colonialism. Political economy, learnt from British education, was again turned into a trenchant critique of colonial economic exploitation.¹⁷ Radical political economy showed a second type of internal limitation to the re-enactment thesis. Although it fell short of a fully worked out theory of imperialism, it showed how the faults of the colonial economic process were systemic, persistently long-term, and therefore hardly reducible to the greed of individuals.

¹⁶ The great text of this critique is Bankim Chandra's satirical work, *Kamalakanta and Lok Rahasya*. Unfortunately, in most discussions the focus is exclusively on his novel *Anandamath*.

¹⁷ The classics of this tradition were Naoroji (1901) and Dutt (1960).

or failure of administration, or the notorious venality of the lower orders of bureaucracy staffed primarily by native officials.

It was gradually recognized that a third kind of response was required, one of breaking away from the embarrassing dichotomy of the early years, of simple acceptance or rejection. Significantly, it was appreciated that the major question was not one involving the relation between British colonialism and India, but rather one of fashioning an adequate theoretical response to the historical phenomenon of modernity. Accordingly, the focus of historical reflection would shift from the British empire to the civilization of modernity as a whole. And this critique of modernity coincided with a self-understanding that became eventually nationalist in the full sense of the term.

Undermining the intellectual legitimacy of colonial power is certainly a necessary constituent of nationalism, but this cannot by itself constitute a mature nationalist ideology. Nationalist ideas are directed *against* a foreign occupying power, but in order to be fully nationalist they must also have a more positive directedness *towards* a conception of what the nation is. Would it not be strange to form from 'nationalist' a form of consciousness which has yet to decide what it is to be its nation? The worship of a nation, its semi-religious ardour, cannot be produced by an entirely negative critique of imperialism's political economy.

The sentiments, emotions, symbolic political acts and, finally, the pressure of its popular movements must be directed politically at an object—the territory and its people, through various contingent and complex processes, ultimately constituted by their collective imagination as the nation. Nationalism is an intensely poetic and dramatic affair, and at the heart of its historical initiatives stand the acts of an entire people, or acts initiated on their behalf. All national movements eventually conceal the provisionality and contingency of the process by which this people is formed in historical imagination; historical research, however, shows precisely their contingency, provisionality, and teaches us to be anxious about their fragile and reversible destiny.

Bankim Chandra's work reveals the hesitations, false starts, and mis-recognitions of the self which accompanied this unaccustomed business of thinking into existence a new collective self. Although he undoubtedly contributes powerfully to the fashioning of the shape of the Indian nationalist consciousness, his work shows three different solutions to the same question: who are the *we* that intellectuals speak on behalf of, and, paramountly, who are this 'we' who should oppose colonial rule?

The first answer was that this collective self was the Bengali '*jati*' led by its natural leaders, the educated *bhadralok*; in another version, after he lost faith in this collaborationist class, this *jati* was to be led by

exemplary leaders emerging from the masses. His second answer, which negates the Bengali identity and looks for something much larger and more powerful, tends towards the Hindu *jati*. A third solution is to speak of the '*bharatiya jati*', a nation of Indians. What is interesting is the possibility of applying the title of the *jati* to all of them, and this indicates not so much a linguistic ambiguity in the writing of someone exceptionally careful in his use of language as a semantic openness relating to the ambiguity of historical possibility itself.

If the Bengali *jati* is an unlikely candidate for successful struggle against the might of British imperialism, the search for a viable nation has to look in other directions. Bengalis did not constitute the stuff of a good nation not because they were lacking in sentiments of solidarity, but because they could not provide a credible opposition to the power of the empire. The enormous extent of the British empire, its much vaunted reach, military power, and technical excellence, required a political bloc that was larger, weightier, and equally massive to take on in an equal struggle against its resources. Bengalis were inadequate for such an historical enterprise.

Slowly, Bankim Chandra breaks up the boundaries of this Bengali 'we', seen either upside down or rightside up, and seeks another configuration of 'we' among others who share similar grievances, similar hopes and passions, but who are more likely subjects of defiance against the indignities heaped upon them by colonialism than the spoilt and enfeebled Bengali intelligentsia. Three peoples appeal to him from this angle: the Rajputs, the Sikhs, and the Marathas.

In Bankim Chandra's novels, Bengalis are often effortlessly replaced by characters taken from these regions and placed in their histories; though occasionally this pretence breaks down, and despite their distinctly un-Bengali martial prowess these characters continue to behave culturally in disturbingly Bengali ways. A powerful Rajput king observes, with scrupulous regard, rules of matrimonial negotiation of nineteenth century Bengali *bhadralok* (Chatterjee, 1964).

There is a problem in this gerrymandering of the boundaries of selfhood or collective identity. True, the Bengali is taught with amazing quickness to say 'we' and 'ours' about Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs, and to include them in his/her references to his/her collective self. And, in this period of rise of high Bengali culture, they gratuitously assume that the communities so included in the Bengalis' sentimental embrace would reciprocate this emotion of mutuality. Who indeed would not feel honoured by this Bengali gesture of inclusion?

In some respects this inclusive movement remains ambiguous,

indeterminate between two very different constructions. The common thread among these peoples is of course their record of successful defiance against unjust and predatory power, but what is problematic is the identity of this predatory enemy. If taken literally, these peoples fought against Muslims, in some cases also against the power of British armies, and Bankim Chandra's fiction, for reasons which are only partially stylistic, plays powerfully on the anti-Muslim phase of their history.

These episodes can also be taken symbolically, non-literally, in which case, of course, when he pointed his finger at the Muslim he may have actually meant the British. However, this indicates two other possible ways of conceiving the nation to which Bankim Chandra and his audience could belong—the first would be a national identity of Hindus which would treat Muslims as invaders and prevent their assimilation in the nationalist movement. But finally, there was also the last and the most attractive construction of the nation as the motherland—territorial, bounteous, benign, not discriminating between her Hindu and Muslim sons, and technically, the hymn to this motherland, *Vande Mataram*, fails to work statistically unless Muslims are included among those who raise their swords in her defence.

Bankim Chandra belonged to the pioneering generation of nationalism, which means that the decision they found so hard to take, which caused so much agonized reflection, becomes routine for people who follow them. The decision it took them such a long time to take—in favour of a territorial nation—became decisively entrenched in later nationalist thought. Subsequently, when histories of Indian nationalist thought were written, Bankim Chandra's generation was seen, correctly in its own way, as the founding generation of this nationalist tradition, erasing from this narrative all the hesitation, tentativeness, and anxiety which surrounded that choice. History is after all the story of what happened, and not of possibilities which came close to happening but did not.

Bankim Chandra, along with his generation, thus illustrates the necessity of the distinction I advocate, namely that between a mere *anti-colonial* consciousness and a properly *nationalist* one. I am arguing that the second can appear only when a particular identity for the nation has been chosen and has been met, due to a host of circumstances, with general popular sanction. Thus it showed the strong connection that making of history has with thinking about history.

The nation in this period is literally a construction, an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983); and, in constituting this community through this founding imagination, history, in its popular form, as an irreducible mixture of facts and fantasy (*res factae* and *res fictae*) plays a crucial part. There appears to exist a necessary inversion in nationa-

list historical discourse: ordinary popular consciousness regards this search for history as a search for the past narrative of a community, already constituted, that has existed before and independently of this narrative and can, in principle, exist independently of this story-telling. In reality, however, stories are not such negligible things. It is by telling these stories, by this construction of the past that this community, in exactly this shape and form, comes into existence. It is partly this narrative consciousness that determines the being of a nation.

This story-telling about a collective self represents an important contribution to the making of a nationalist mentality, an act of imagining, of conceiving things narratively in a radically different way. In earlier phases of colonial history, the defiance of Tipu, of the Marathas or the princes of the north, had happened as different, distinct struggles of political principalities and their often selfish rulers against equally selfish British expansionism.

When such desperate struggles were actually under way, the Bengali *babu* was contentedly enjoying the comforts of colonial subalternity. The trickle-down from British expansion for his class was not inconsiderable. In the '60s and '70s his gradual alienation from the British creates a new imaginative order which does not lead to political protest, but in a way of seeing earlier struggles as a single unfolding process of defiance. He appropriates other struggles and gives them a new meaning by fitting them into a new configuration. Struggles of Mysore, Marathas, Sikhs, and the northern royalty, carried on severally without mutual recognition, were united in history books and novels, and eventually in the more intangible and powerful popular imagination.

Gradually, these are turned into a single process called and recognized as Indian history rather than (regrettably) separately regional or dynastic chronicles. The common element is the common denominator of negative presence of the British in all these stories—the common cause of the ruin of Tipu in the south, the Mughals in the north, and above all the undeserved neglect of the meritorious *bhadralok* in the east. The deprivations and injustices which they suffered, viewed from close quarters, were quite significantly different. Yet, the fact that these were all due to the British gave these grievances a tangible character of commonness and formed the narrative mould of a most powerful sentiment.

Discourse of nationalism

The advent of the Congress represents the next stage in the evolution

of nationalist discourse. Indeed, the origin of the Congress is itself brought about by the cultural changes which took place in the mid-colonial period. Assertion of regional vernacular cultures was accompanied by the deep divide in the earlier more homogeneous cultures in which both the traditional élites and subalterns participated in different ways.

This change can be illustrated by referring to elementary social practices. Formerly, both the learned Brahmin and the illiterate peasant performed *pūja*, though in admittedly different styles, but they were bound together by a bond of intelligibility. Such a bond would be conspicuously missed in the case of a modern atheistic babu and the illiterate peasant. While the earlier situation was unequal and the practices were mutually intelligible, the latter case is one of inequality without such intelligibility.

The creation of a new class of western-educated intelligentsia, assisted by the bounty of the colonial dispensation which enabled them to acquire substantial economic assets apart from cultural dominance, altered the terrain of political discourse in basic ways. Increasingly, the new élite deserts the indigenous subaltern classes, forswears any kinship with them, turning historically into leaders without a following. Their isolation forces them to assume an increasingly mendicant posture towards the colonial authorities, in the hope that the injustices of colonial political economy would be rectified by the unassisted power of rational arguments. They shared their discursive common sense with the British rulers, and they wished accordingly to rectify colonial suffering by shaming the British into adopting appropriate policies of reform.

Popular rebellions against British rule, not surprisingly, assume more pronouncedly folk, popular character, deriving their active leadership either from traditional élites ruined by colonialism or from among themselves—with the obvious disadvantage that the relatively narrow frontiers of regional consciousness proved to be the natural frontiers of their rebellions. As they often did not understand the scale and intricacy of the colonial structure well enough, and failed to build large enough coalitions, the administration could put them down with relative ease.

Tilak already represented a change in this fatal bifurcation in anti-colonial discontent and showed a distinct petty bourgeois admiration for popular protests. But, it was Gandhi and his peculiar discourse which achieved a re-combination of these increasingly diverging trends of anti-colonial dissent. His manner of achieving this is significant for an understanding of the subsequent trajectory of independent India, and has to be analysed with care.

Gandhi solved this problem of a disrupted, divided political

inheritance with unprecedented originality. The difference between high and low culture, as has already been pointed out, was no new thing in Indian history; but the new distinction was not between high and low in the same register; rather, it became two incommensurable registers resisting mutual translation. Ideas of political reasonableness were being cut up in two. Resistance, under these conditions, had little chance of attaining really threatening social depth or spatial spread. Élite dissatisfaction spread thinly across India, but had little popular support. Popular defiance, occasional and intense, was usually restricted to small regions. It was easy for the colonial order to ignore the first and suppress the second.

To put the argument schematically, Gandhi gradually forged a new configuration of nationalism which, because of its carefully crafted semiotic dualism, could be considered reasonable from both orbits of discourse. An analysis of Gandhi's trial would reveal how carefully he arranged this double intelligibility of his political acts. What he said and did against the colonial state, in the full publicity of its courts in 1922, made sense in two different ways, but each way of making sense would have made little sense to the other.

Gandhi's acts at this trial could be read off without mystification or residue by the two different discourses about the political world. Politics could be seen as something absolutely central to the constitution of society, and this arena conceived as a field of instrumental and strategic action. Alternatively, the state could be seen, extending a traditional Indian mode of thinking, as something grand, spectacular, but distant; a far-off cause of much suffering but normally unamenable to the initiatives of ordinary men and women. Great men and women could occasionally arise and right its wrongs for some time, and they deserved support because they took on this great cause on behalf of the wretched and the inarticulate of the earth.

Acts that Gandhi undertook could make sense in terms of both conceptions of politics. The modernist intelligentsia could see in them the work of a shrewd colonial lawyer who carefully chose the terrain, the occasion, and the exact legal point of his struggle against British colonial legality, who posed to that legal system problems especially difficult to solve.¹⁸ He could do so precisely because he knew that system inside out, and as the unfortunate judge found to his profound discomfiture, he offered for judgement a curious mixture of compliance and defiance.¹⁹

The element of defiance made it dangerous for the colonial state to let his behaviour go unpunished; the accompanying aspect of

¹⁸ Consider, in particular, his handling of the judge in his 1922 trial.

¹⁹ Gandhi pleaded guilty, and indeed went on to claim that he had gone much further in treason than the prosecution had maintained in its official charge.

meekness, non-violence, and acquiescence in legal penalties made it risky to punish it too harshly. That might incense Indian subjects and fail to be intelligible to public opinion at home, under the scrutiny of which all acts of the colonial administration were brought. A reading of this kind, evidently plausible, would fall within the circle of modernist discourse—with a typically instrumental rationalist conception of the state, which reckoned by means of ideas such as political objectives, rational calculation of means, interests of individuals and groups, strategy, tactics, advance, retreat, manoeuvre.

Gandhi's defiance and its constitutive gestures could also be read in a radically different way. To ordinary Indian peasants, accustomed to the age-old experience of irresistibility of state injustice and the ineffectiveness of the rhetoric of resistance except as a miracle, he appeared in a miraculous, already mythical light. He appeared as a Mahatma or gratuitous redeemer of the world's suffering, who had no earthly personal reason to enter this contest, but who had the courage, precisely the mark of the saint, to take the sufferings of ordinary mankind upon himself, and to suffer the indignities of others. Moderns would view him in a frame of the linear temporality of an unknown but hopeful future; a future which would be newly fashioned, which would be better than the inglorious past, because history is demystified to them and is seen as the sum of the conscious and deliberate acts of human individuals.

Peasants would often think they knew better, and treated such modernist futures with cynicism. For them, he came in the frame of a traditional, intolerably long cyclical temporality, of endless cycles of eternal injustice and occasional relief that was miraculous, after which life was likely to settle back into the familiar tedious pattern of iniquity and suppression. Gandhi was the typical doer of the miraculous act which was at the same time both new and ancient, which happened only rarely, but was known to have happened earlier too in the lives of similar yet different saints in times of similar yet different darkness.²⁰ Although it had happened earlier, each time it took place again, it had the sparkle, the newness of a miraculous deliverance. Thus, Gandhi's politics could be seen transparently from either side, but each side saw a different thing.

Gandhi's politics was dualist in a further sense. He reached his two audiences through the use of two separate registers of communication and persuasion. Gandhi wrote a great deal, for the middle class's medium of politics was language in all its wordiness. A politician was known only by his/her words—speeches, articles, books, interviews,

²⁰ For an excellent account of how the popular image of Gandhi was formed, see Amin (1984).

promises, retractions, prevarications, ambiguity, arguments—the whole intellectualist conception of a world approached primarily through words. To the majority of their illiterate countrymen and countrywomen the world of words, especially the written word, represented something wholly different, a world of denial, of disenfranchisement and hiding.

Words, when written, appeared to the peasant, used to the mendacity of the usurer and *mahajan*, the connivance of the petty official, deviously silent, a taking away of language rather than a giving, more akin to a conspiracy than to a universal and popular consultation. Spoken language, when it was not legally arcane or intellectually pedantic, was better, for it restored through the medium of mass meetings and political conversation some of the universality of languages. Even spoken language failed to cross other, more fundamental barriers—when these were constituted not by natural but by conceptual languages.

Gandhi, unlike other politicians, circumvented this difficulty with the aid of two instrumentalities. Gandhi himself as the individual politician resorted to the use of other elements in the complex and wide semiotic register available in rural India; it included the symbolism of a whole range of non-discursive and non-modern ways of making meaning—from prayers to silences to dress to food, which for all their non-wordiness represented ideas and persuaded people by techniques that had been deployed for their persuasion for centuries. This, of course, appeared strangely retrograde and perverse to modernists of all types, but the strident criticism made against these elements of Gandhi's politics missed the point that what was significant in them was not their content, but the semiotic form.

Besides this personal solution, the national movement solved the problem of the two circles of common sense by a different technique of translation. The structure of the discourse of nationalism, in its mature phase, crucially depended on a *diglossia*. Élites which gained political influence in different regions came together and formed an all-India coalition on the basis of a bilingual pattern of communication, speaking and writing in their regional vernaculars and in English. Partly, this made for a minimal translation of ideas from one circle of discourse to another. It is a major part of my argument that this essential *diglossia* is being destroyed in current Indian culture and is being replaced by exacerbating clashes between unilingual and English-using élite and equally unilingual but much less quiescent speakers of regional languages.

Despite his political successes, Gandhi's cultural achievement was limited. He did not create a single common sense out of the two conceptual languages which emerged in Indian culture through

colonialism. His own style was too personal, too idiosyncratic, to form a structural base for a new, truly common 'common sense' which could become a part of the foundation of an independent Indian state. He remained more a hinge between the two discourses rather than become the creator of a culture of mutual translation.

In the history of Indian nationalism, Gandhi occupies a strange and paradoxical place. It is a matter of some surprise how a trend politically so central can be culturally so insignificant: while the movement was contesting the power of the British, Gandhi remained its central figure; after Independence, in the serious business of Constitution-framing, adherents of his ideas caused amused and embarrassed comment. To put it somewhat differently, Gandhi the political leader won the unstinted adherence of a large majority of the nationalist leadership, but his thought failed to gain a similar influence, let alone dominance.

From the mid-'30s, Congress nationalism came to be affected by a new emphasis on social radicalism. Its popular support was unevenly spread across the regions of Congress dominance, but its moral critique of the indifference of earlier nationalism to questions of poverty and social justice was successful in introducing a certain tone of concern. It is not easy to gauge the consequences of this radical intervention in nationalist ideology: while it obliged everyone to speak of poverty and backwardness in a caring tone, perhaps it also taught politicians to indulge in rhetoric not seriously meant.

Radical nationalism had several different, regionally influential forms; but radicals constituted a fractious and unstable group incapable of working out coalitions among themselves, and therefore unable to realize the full effect of their weight. They never came to wield the influence they could have exercised had they stayed together. Mutual recrimination and fractious squabbling reduced each segment to ignoble compromises with ideological adversaries.

Communists pulled along in isolation, and their utter friendlessness in the 'peoples' war' phase imposed some curious decisions on them, making them appear to those less internationally inclined as untrustworthy collaborators with the colonial power. Socialists, left isolated in their turn by their visceral disapproval of communists and by communist isolationism, eventually came to find ironic solidarity with chauvinistic groups. Nehru, himself a part of the left, remained always variously estranged from the two other streams, and consequently helplessly dependent on Gandhi, and consigned his frustrations to the pages of his autobiography.

If we consider socialist ideology from the point of view of the attitude towards modernity of these different groups, a large measure of unanimity emerges despite some differences. They turned the

problem that modernity had posed to earlier nationalists by means of a simple device. Marxism sensitized them particularly to the historicity of theoretical and practical forms; radicals thus refused to consider European modernity as a homogeneous process. Compared to their early nationalist forbears, they understood its internal stratifications, contradictions, oppositions. The radical theory of history, upon which all of them drew, emerged from the underside of modernity, from the side of its dis-privilege and denial, its internal other; and, as Leninist theory emphasized, there was a natural connection of perceptions of history and collective interest between the internal other of modernity and its external other, the metropolitan proletariat and colonial peoples.

Following this tradition, radical nationalism effected a restructuring of the earlier dispute between westernism and indigenism. Radical nationalism was primarily modernist. It accepted the universality of rationalist social thought, the idea that any human being was a potential utterer of its truths. It decided to take this offer of universalism implicit in western rationalism literally at its word, and argued forcefully for enfranchisement within human reason of the dispossessed both in capitalist societies and in colonial countries.

Colonial radicals saw in this the opportunity of creating a new theory of potential re-enactment of European modernity. Socialism, i.e. modernity, purged of its capitalist form, was universalizable. This time, it was not to be a fraudulent re-enactment under the aegis of colonial powers; rather, colonialism had itself become an obstacle to the re-enactment process. Once colonial power was removed, this re-enactment of modernity would become feasible at last.

Political thinking of late nationalism showed a renewed vigour of theoretical imitativeness, Leftists declaring as their major undertaking not the invention of a social theory, but an 'application', in the strictly imitative sense of this term, of their preferred radical doctrine—Jaya-prakash Narayan and the communists, a version of Marxism; and Nehru, after an initial adherence to that, veering as he came close to his tryst with prime ministerial destiny, towards a British labour version of parliamentary social democracy. And since, by a combination of political necessity and pure fortuitousness, the large section of the élite following Nehru came to control the apparatus of government after freedom, this specific theory was translated into the historical agenda of reconstruction of the new Indian state.

Nationalism since Independence

The strand of nationalism associated with Nehru has, of late, come

under heavy and unrelenting criticism, partly an understandable cross borne by any political ideology that has won power; others can always criticize it from their position of ineffectual innocence. It would be interesting to undertake an initial classification of these criticisms, because these stem from extremely diverse grounds. However, as a preliminary classification, we must also distinguish between the genuine articles of the pattern of thinking associated with Nehru and a fraudulent extension of it that sought patronage and privilege in its name during Indira Gandhi's days in undisputed power.

Nehru's design, unlike its fraudulent successor, consisted of a serious proposal for the construction of a European style social democracy under economic conditions of extreme backwardness and political conditions prevailing in the aftermath of nationalist mobilization. Two of its central theses have received a great deal of critical attention, and need simply to be mentioned here.

1. With nearly all other views of development of its time, it shared an excessively economic conception of the idea of development, reducing all other elements in it to the status of corollaries. Ironically, it now appears in retrospect that the relative successes of its economic plans are in danger of being erased due to its negligence of cultural reproduction processes.

2. Another central weakness of this design, which it partly shared with Soviet models of growth, stemmed from its tendency to rely too heavily on the instrumentality of the state, and to suffocate non-state institutions of civil society by theoretically equating the principle of public good with the institutional form of state control.

It negligently disregarded the possibility that state institutions could be effectively 'privatized' in particularly hideous forms, and become vehicles of private and sectional interests of a malignantly pre-bourgeois nature. This was particularly likely in India, given the great richness and variety of its long tradition of political tyranny of all kinds. The privatization of the benefits of the state, an institution supposed to counteract the injustices of the market, generated its own, even less accountable iniquities, and additionally, made its criticism even more problematic by equating its ravages with the operation of the principles of social justice. But I shall confine my remarks to some other features of the form of nationalist thinking which carried Nehru's imprimatur.

Whatever the weaknesses of the productive and distributive principles of the Nehru model, it was generally assumed that its cultural programme (or rather, its lack of one) was quite adequate for the historical tasks that the nation faced. This nationalism was given implicit acquiescence even by its Leftist critics, as it was assumed that it

provided for a secular base for the Indian nation state. I think this can hardly be taken for granted, and shall offer some critical arguments.

It can be argued that there is a strong connection between an ideology and a way of creating a narrative of the historical record, as these are crucial elements in reducing the threatening chaos of the social world in which people live into the reassuring form of an order. In this again, one significant element is how its own history, its historical self-description is fitted into the larger narrative of world history that it wishes to tell. As this history is essentially political in character, its attraction lies not in its constancy but in its ability to adapt its structure to the political requirements of changing circumstances.

This will become clear if we compare the different stories that the Congress had told about itself during three stages of its career. In the actual course of the nationalist movement, Congress often faced strong competition from contending forms of nationalism: e.g. terrorist nationalism, the communists, or even Subhas Chandra Bose's Forward Bloc. Contemporary historical accounts of the Congress movement reflected such political strains; and consequently, its historians did not see these trends as part of itself separated by a regrettable but temporary misunderstanding; on the contrary, they often attempted to condemn these trends as anti-national simply because their construction of what nationalism was tended to be different from the Congress's.²¹

After Independence, there has been a discernible shift in this political narration. Earlier on, the line of division between the Congress and other trends of nationalist politics used to be drawn with great sharpness. Official histories written immediately after freedom, in the warm afterglow of victory, tended to blur such divisions. In the massive history by Tara Chand (1961–72), for instance, a significant rewriting takes place: anti-Congress trends are not distanced with aversion and mistrust; rather the allegiance that they enjoyed among dissenting groups is sought to be assimilated into the ideology of a triumphant Congress. A kind of retrospective generosity is extended to them in their new portrayal, and the sharp differences and controversies that actually erupted between them are played down.

Nationalist discourse thus produced, through its varying channels—school textbooks, official propaganda, the media, the ceremonies of remembrance, the symbolic sequence of holidays—a really composite pantheon of national leaders, not in an attempt to restore

²¹ A clear example of such conflict can be found in the common treatment of the Communist decision to support the British war effort in 1942, against the nationalist call to quit India.

to this phase of Indian history its actual baffling diversity, but to appropriate them into a predominantly Congress past. The story of the national movement as a whole is slowly assimilated into the history of the Congress.

This history of history-writing is a matter of some significance for Indian politics and its relation with culture. By the '70s, with Indira Gandhi's use of a more radical nationalist posture, the political requirement of nationalist ideology altered substantially. It was now useful to claim the heritage of the entire national movement as a pre-history of the Congress as refashioned by Indira Gandhi's distinctive new slogans.

Accordingly, there was renewed revision of the history of the nationalist movement. The definition of nationalism was narrowed down to fit a strictly 'Nehruvian' vision of what Indian nationalism was, with a strong emphasis on secularism, socialism, the extension of principles of liberal equality towards social democracy.²² There is no doubt, of course, that if it were open to choose our past, this is what we would like to choose; this is the sort of nationalism that many of us would have preferred.

Analytically, it is of signal importance that the nationalism of our preference is not confused with the nationalism that really existed, which was certainly less secular, less inclined towards social justice, and was often unenthusiastic about observance of basic democratic practices. However, this was not a conflation that accidentally erupted in academic history at a particular point; rather, its picture of the past chimed in perfectly with the temporary cadence of Congress ideology under Indira Gandhi.

It differentiated itself from other trends in nationalism in today's India and served several ideological purposes.

²² I suspect that the canonical Nehruism of the '70s was significantly different from Nehru's own ideological stance on several points.

(i) Nehru, in his later writing, was far less enthusiastic about Marxist theory, and took great pains to stress that what he called socialism should never be confused with any version of Soviet communism

(ii) Nehru was far more scrupulous about the observance of democratic norms, despite admittedly glaring lapses.

It is doubtful if he would have seen bourgeois democratic norms as obstacles to imminent social change, and rejoiced in their demolition during the Emergency. The 'Nehruvians' belatedly recognized the value of democratic norms when the Emergency caught up with them. But, despite their retrospective repentance, it should not be forgotten that this group provided the ideological justification for Indira Gandhi's destruction of constitutional controls over executive authority, probably in the expectation that they would be the secondary or tertiary beneficiaries of this concentration of power. Their motive for a self-serving invocation of Nehru's name is of course transparent; but to credit that with the badge of 'Nehruism' is to be unfair to Nehru

1. It portrayed itself as the sole heir of the heritage of the national movement.

2. It condemned other trends as either communal or conservative and, therefore, by definition anti-national.

3. By claiming that Indian nationalism had fought for the realization of the principles that Indira Gandhi (as it turned out, inconstantly) espoused, it sought to prevent its political opponents appealing to that fund of regard that an ordinary Indian had for this common nationalist historical legacy.

It can be argued that the original narrative of history, though less simplistic and less self-interested, contained massive misrepresentations of India's cultural history. Acceptance of the paradigmatic European models of nation formation revealed how crucial the cultural unification process was for a nation. Given this model (if, in other words, this was regarded not as one type of nation formation but its only possible, and therefore universal, form), it would appear embarrassing to admit that India was not a nation that was already formed culturally and merely waiting to be emancipated from British rule. It was still more embarrassing to acknowledge that, in strange and ironic ways, British rule created the preconditions for this nationalism by imposing systems of common suffering and common living under the colonial order.

It was politically more uplifting for the nationalist leadership to assert that this nation of India was formed by a cultural process which went back into immemorial antiquity. Nationalist ideology thus projected an exaggerated argument about India's 'composite culture', which was in the nature of a hopeful abstraction rather than a belief supported by a detailed and serious enquiry into India's cultural past. This encouraged a massive pretence on the part of the national movement and later by the national state that the question of cultural construction of the nation was left behind in the past, rather than lying still in the future. It made Indians believe that the imagining of the nation was an accomplished and irreversible fact; it did not have to be constantly presented and justified. Anyone who did not take the Indian nation for granted must be in clandestine collusion with forces opposed to India's national freedom. By encouraging this cultural default, the narrative of Indian nationalism (spawned by adherents of Nehru's vision) is partly to blame for the politico-cultural crisis that India's state order is facing today.

I would like to make a brief remark about social theory here. Colonialism and nationalism, each in its own way, placed the agenda

of modernity firmly at the centre of Indian politics. Nationalism, as Gellner points out in his incisive if somewhat one-sided study, has an inextricable connection with the enterprise of modernity in the history of the West. Although its relation with modernity is more complex in the case of colonial societies, in the case of Indian nationalism this relation with aspiration towards modernity is clearly evident.²³ Nehru's nationalism viewed colonialism as the main obstacle to India's path towards a westernized scientific modernity; therefore, in a paradox, removal of European power was the precondition for successful emulation of European history.

This strand of nationalism prided itself on its theoretical self-awareness, the central characteristic of its theory being the celebration of modernity. Yet, on reflection, there was an immense difference between the way emergent modernity appeared to the most intelligent and perspicacious observers in Europe in the nineteenth century²⁴ and the way it appeared to its distant worshippers after the lapse of a century.

All major social theory in Europe emerged out of a cognitive struggle with a sense of bewilderment in the face of modern history: Marx's theory of capitalism, de Tocqueville's of democracy, and Weber's on secularism. Modernity, to those who lived through its first phase, seemed the most difficult word to understand and bring under social control. To the Asian modernists, modernity seemed attractive precisely because it posed no Hegelian riddle, it held no Rousseauesque terrors, nor did it require the massive Marxist intellectual enterprise about knowing history. Modernity was simplicity itself, a simple conflict between superstition and knowledge, error and science, in which, moreover, a benign history had arranged victory for science and truth in advance.

Koselleck (1985) has argued that modernity changed the human conception of the future in a new structure of temporal consciousness. Formerly, the future held no fears entirely different from the sufferings of the present, because, it was believed, as Machiavelli put it, 'men will live and die in order for ever to remain the same' (1970: 142).²⁵ Modernity destroyed this assurance of continuity and faced

²³ It would be absurd to deny that substantial parts of the Indian national movement looked at the proposals of modernity with deep mistrust and moral repugnance. However, the general ideological tenor of the movement and certainly the ideology of the nation-state was decidedly modernist. For an interesting classification of trends of nationalist thought, see Parekh (1989: 11–70).

²⁴ Some of the major theorists of this modernity—de Tocqueville, Marx, and Weber—showed a deeply critical and mistrustful attitude to the concept.

²⁵ *Discourses of Livy* (Discourse II, 'Concerning the Religion of the Romans').

human beings for the first time with a future of a radical newness which deeply troubled conservatives and delighted revolutionaries.

As Arendt's (1970) work showed, the concept of revolution in its new linear sense was deeply connected with this novel concept of the future, coming to stand, in a strange etymological reversal, for exactly the opposite of what it literally denoted (Arendt, 1970: especially 42ff.). History did not foreshadow the return of inevitable old patterns with minor variations, but the creation by human endeavour of unprecedented conditions—of states of political freedom, justice, and public happiness never conceived of before. It was not missed by some who observed the rise of this new politics of modernity that this new future contained equal dangers—unprecedented terrors for which there were no precedents of either preparation or prevention.

This new conception of the future altered the nature of historical knowledge, or its judicious use. History in the old sense became redundant at one stroke, lines of events would not be the same, the future could not be understood by studying the past. A new kind of knowledge of history had to take its place: it was a knowledge of processes, not learning about events. Rational social theory was to take over the function of explanation from earlier historical scholarship. Most of these theorists believed that it was possible, despite unprecedented complexity, to live in history with a form of prospective rationality. Social theory was supposed to provide this indispensable implement of living rationally under conditions of modernity. But, it could do so only by giving up the myth of re-enactments: the future was uncertain but still not unmasterable. People must not expect the past to be replayed in the future.

Modernity places the Indian in a similar historical position; yet the modernists' reading of his/her historical placement is radically different. While the actual problem with modernity is its ever-recurring unprecedentedness—that is, other peoples' modernity cannot entirely show the picture of our future—the modernist believes that its main attraction lies in the fact that it, in a manner of speaking, lets us into history's secret; through the European past, we know the script in advance. With the fading of this optimism, a new series of questions arises insistently: the specific ways in which capitalist production emerges in these societies, the peculiar twists of their democratic process. Is modernity ineluctable? Is it divisible? Can its inexorable logic be bent to the demands of rational, critical, equitable control?

These questions themselves pose the problem of the nature and configuration of historical knowledge in interesting ways. Historical knowledge in this context is always a knowledge of processes, not learning about the sequence of incidents but of the logic of structures. This would not mean looking at incidents in European history as

precedents, and waiting like M.N. Roy for the arrival of our French or Russian revolution or Renaissance. This does not mean, on the other hand, giving up reading Europe's history, as chauvinist indigenism would advocate. For there is no other place to analyse the processes of modernity except in the historical annals of the West, and processes happen through events. Only in this way can we finally break out of the strange sentimentality of the relationship with Europe's history that lay at the heart of our nationalist discourse. Like de Tocqueville's description of American history, what we face today is unprecedented, but not unmasterable. Like him, in India, we also live in an age in which the past has ceased to throw light on the future. And we too face a new kind of undetermined time.

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Nation: Discourse and Intervention • 11

by the Communists in India

JAVEED ALAM

Nationalist thinking in India prior to the CPI's intervention

The story of the communist interventions into the discourse about the nation in India begins meaningfully only in the early '40s. Earlier, the communist party had published a few articles on bourgeois nationalism.¹ It was during the '40s, after the demand for sovereign Pakistan had become insistent, that the communists began to ask questions about whether or not India was a 'nation', or what kind of a national entity it was, or what the best way would be of introducing the 'national idea' into the political debates that were taking place in the country.

It is important to pursue this story for two reasons. First, it introduced into the ongoing discourse on the concept of nation (from the 1880s onwards) dimensions which had never been considered.

¹ E.g. 'What True Nationalism Demands', *National Front* (22 Oct., 1939); 'Congress and Muslims', *National Front* (19 Sept., 1938); 'The Way Out', *National Front* (1 Jan. 1939) and the political resolutions between 1937 and 1940.

The sheer novelty, if not originality of these aspects and, therefore, their incomprehensibility—to those who belonged to mainstream thinking on nationalism—stands out. The communist party, as will be shown in the course of this chapter, was in a position to break away from the hegemony of the nationalist thought by questioning its basic assumptions, of which the most basic was the need for a pre-existent nation, an essential prerequisite for the anti-colonial freedom movement. Second, this story also brings out the pitfalls of transferring, *a priori*, a theory which spreads out its canvas to encompass experience on a global level—a specific case such as that of India. This then is also a story which provides a glimpse into the modes of applicability of the general theory of nation, as well as its imperfections, as it is applied to different regions.

In order to grasp the novelty of the interventions of the communists, we shall begin with a *detour* into the earlier Indian debates on the self-representation of India as a national identity. More than any other term in the social and political discourse on India, the term 'nation' enjoys a complicated status; this is particularly the case since everyday or commonplace use of the term is open to enormous confusion.² Very few terms invoke such intense passions and invite prejudices to the fore as does the term 'nation'. It therefore carries a blinding force that can block meaningful conversations except on terms set by the protagonists.

In India there has been a strong and widespread tendency, in almost all variants of nationalist thinking, to *immemorialize* the nation (i.e. assume that India has always been a nation from time immemorial). Even a 'modern' politician such as Nehru immemorialized the Indian 'nation' in a way that is not compatible with his treatment of other themes of contemporary concern such as democracy, socialism, capitalism, and secularism. In his writings on such contemporary problems, Nehru drew heavily on the enlightenment tradition both in its liberal and in its Marxist versions. His general approach consisted of locating the problems in history and using reason in order to disentangle their relationships. But this was not the case when it came to analysing the nation.

This assertion about Nehru can be substantiated only inferentially from Nehru's writings. Nowhere did he explicitly assert that the Indian nation had existed from ancient times onwards. On the contrary, he said, for example, that in ancient and mediaeval times, 'the idea of the modern nation was nonexistent, and feudal, religious

² For how the term 'nation' was used in the early phase of nationalism, see Limaye, 1989: III–27; for the later period, see Pandey, 1990.

or racial or cultural bonds had more importance' (1946: 41). He, however, added 'Yet I think that at almost *any time* in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India ...' (ibid.). Implicit in this statement is the notion that, in the case of India the other 'bonds' enumerated above may have been transcended in some sense. More explicitly he commented in the same passage as follows:

The Pathan and the Tamil are two extreme examples; the others lie somewhere in-between. All of them have their distinctive features, all of them have still more the distinguishing mark of India. It is fascinating to find how the Bangalees, the Marathas, the Gujeratis, the Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Panjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs, and the great central block comprising the Hindustani people, have retained their peculiar characteristics for *hundreds of years*, have still more or less the same viruses and failings of which old tradition or record tells us, and yet have been *throughout these ages distinctively Indian, with the same national heritage* and the same set or moral and mental qualities. [1946: 40; emphasis supplied.]

The key aspect of the theme of immemorialness of the Indian nation is not simply that the people here are impressed with an imprint which is peculiarly Indian but that this has existed *throughout the ages*, as an overarching *national heritage* over the individual, linguistic features of the various peoples who have been living in India. What is observed today as the intersection of regional-nationality and the pan-Indian features is not a modern phenomenon but has been there forever. It is being clearly suggested that this Indian nation is immemorial in the sense that what has unified the innumerable, distinct, linguistic-cultural groups in India has been the same *national heritage* coming down from hundreds of years.

Elsewhere Nehru says:

Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that *tremendous impress of oneness*, which had held all of us together *for ages past*, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us [Nehru, 1946: 38],

and adds immediately:

The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me; it was an emotional experience which overpowered me [Nehru, 1946: 38].

The underlying notion of oneness is spoken almost in the sense in which it is, nowadays, used to refer to a nation.

This sense of oneness or national heritage, existing for ages, comes through to Nehru not by a rational mode of appropriation of social

reality (contrary to the way he refers to social phenomena such as secularism or socialism or democracy) but by an overpowering emotional experience, a kind of a mystic peep into India's uniqueness as a nation.

This is Nehru in his nationalist mould; essentially non-rational in the way he seeks to understand reality. In all other respects, he was a child of the enlightenment who searched for the specificity of 'the process of becoming' of *any* social phenomena. This aspect of Nehru's nationalist thought is reflective of a deeper continuity cutting across all shades of nationalist thought. The immemorialization of India—the nation as the one pole that unified the two distinct streams which made up the nationalist thought—together gave a specific imprint to Indian nationalism. The two streams were the liberal, enlightenment-based trend centring around the ideas of progress (i.e. the secular, democratic, and the homocentric), and cultural deliberations based on religion which sought to invest nationalism with a distinctly defined identity content. Common to both streams was the unexamined equation of the 'national' with the 'civilizational'.

But then, historically, a region representing a civilizational uniformity (uniformity here is a more appropriate term than unity because the latter implies a reflective, thought-out appropriation of the social reality which was not clearly possible in ancient times) has rarely provided a basis for the emergence of politically unified nations. The Arab world, Spanish America, and Western Europe can be taken as good examples of the inappropriateness of such an equation, even if China may be cited as an exception. No historical reasoning can allow one to assume that there is a logical connection between civilizational uniformity and unified policy. Nehru would have been on sound ground had he so limited his assertions to ancient India's civilisational uniformity, or even unity at a later period. But he made an unwarranted jump from civilization to nation without specifying the inner logic for such a transition taking place.

This aspect of nationalist thought which has unified the different streams within it is with us even today. It has wide-ranging repercussions for contemporary politics which it would not be appropriate to discuss here. Nevertheless, a comment may be made to the effect that when the political unity of a 'nation', regarded as immemorial, is threatened by people belonging to certain regional-nationality formations, chauvinistic nationalism (as the most strident voice of the nation) can become the sole protagonist of that which is claimed to be national, and those questioning its unity and integrity and honour being cast in the mould of internal enemies.

Today, when the legitimacy of the Indian state is declining, the communal version of nationalism with its chauvinistic and neo-fascist

overtone is stepping in as the champion of everything that is national; *Hindutva* as an ideology of nationalist appeal has grown like a monster in our society. It is also an interesting line of investigation to examine non-communal forces in order to determine whether the progressive framework of values associated with the model of national unification which Nehru advanced is rendered infirm because Nehru's nationalism harks back to immemorial nationalism. Furthermore, it is also worth examining how emancipatory values can be rescued from the compulsions of nationalism and given an autonomous social existence which can then be pursued for their own sake.

It can be seen from the above account of Nehru's thinking that he slid easily into emotional constructions and wandered into the past in imagining the existence of a nation. Indeed, Nehru provided an apt example of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983).

I have referred to Nehru for a specific reason, namely that the radical liberal in him was out of step with his own intellectual pedigree. Nehru the nationalist was perfectly in tune with his peers and predecessors. To Gandhi, his peer, India had forever been a living reality; its presence had been something entirely tangible. This was true even though India was in urgent need of moral renewal. Tradition in India is such that its national identity can best be felt by peeping into the consciousness based in the religion of its various peoples. If for Nehru, India's immemorial nationhood lay in the synthesis of the many currents that had merged, were merging and (with care) could be made to merge in the future, Gandhi would have liked to see India's immemorialness as a happy coexistence of faiths and religious communities in which Hinduism would remain a benign and nourishing presence. Gandhi's India would not be a synthesis in the way Nehru viewed it, a synthesis capable of transcending the faith-based identities of India. For Gandhi, it would have been enough and perhaps even preferable if the Indian nation could be helped to become a reflective coalition of the living and vibrant faiths of its different peoples.¹ All these definitional positions—of Nehru or of Gandhi—implied a pre-reflective link to culture and tradition of a rather restrictive kind, which is not free from prejudice and self-deception.

It was precisely this perception of the history of the Indian nation and the imaginings of its future that were threatened by the growing strength of the Muslim League and its interventions. The two nation theory advanced by the Muslim League equating the historically

¹ I cannot straightaway point to the sources from Gandhi's writings on which these views are based. But I have drawn from a number of commentators, and especially Chatterjee (1986).

distinct status of the Muslims as a nation, carried, in the view of most other political forces taking part in the anti-colonial struggle, far too many disastrous consequences and damaging implications for the country. Whatever its pragmatic utility for the Muslim leadership, this way of looking at India was theoretically enigmatic. The case for the Muslims was made in terms of religion as constituting the basis of a nation. But, in the process of doing so, the two nation theory resulted in according privileges to Muslims over and above the other religious minorities (in counter-position to the Hindus). If, on the criterion of religion, Muslims were to be a nation, what was one to make of Sikhs, or Christians, or other smaller religious groups? Even if, within the criterion of religion, one were to assume the yardstick of similarity or difference as the basis of the nation, then one still had to answer the question as to how different the Muslims were (e.g. Pathans) from Malayalees, or Christians from Bengalis, and both in counter-position to Hindus. The Muslim League could not raise these questions because the answers would not be forthcoming. It was much safer for Jinnah and the Muslim League to be pragmatic. To be theoretical would be tantamount to getting into a muddle and losing the case for Muslim nationhood.

Everything else within the argument of the Muslim League around fears and apprehensions about power, status, identity, rights, security, jobs, etc. was arguable and contextually tenable. So, politically, they located themselves increasingly on the terrain of an exclusively religiously-defined Muslim nationality and deepened the cleavage between Muslim and Hindu politics. Jinnah's performance was remarkable for driving the Muslim masses into unthinking opposition to the Indian struggle for Independence. His success at critical points drastically altered the fate of the subcontinent of South Asia. How was one to face this challenge of the Muslim League and the politicking of Jinnah? Could it be met by invoking straightforward nationalism? In a colonial situation, nationalism was more specifically an inversion of the power and domination features of ideology. In this sense, nationalism in the colonized part of the world does possess a subversive potential *vis-à-vis* imperialism, but in a different time period and (more importantly) in multinational states, it can be turned around to stand on its head as so many of the regional or ethnic movements in India are doing today. In situations such as those currently prevailing in India, ethnic movements have to be theoretically subverted if nationalism is to remain the overarching doctrine for the patriotic mobilization of popular imagination.

In states made of numerous nationalities, 'nationalism' of a monolithic variety cannot sustain political unity on a democratic foundation. Nationalism, monolithically conceived, negates the right of

nationalities to define their relations with one another and with the centralizing state. National awareness *within* distinct linguistic-cultural regional formations constitutes the basis for demands for political autonomy which reject the threat of external domination as a rationale for overarching nationalism. Communists in general, and the CPI in particular, were acutely aware of this dimension. They attempted to offer an alternative basis for building the political unity of India.

It was against such a background that the communist discourse assumed shape and its critical interventions can be viewed in context. The communists' theoretic moves proved to be right, but this did not prevent them from adopting incorrect political positions. They asked the right kind of questions, but their answers led to confusion and chaos, and even caused ineradicable harm to the popular cause. The communists faltered at critical points in the elaboration of the anti-colonial struggle; yet their interventions resulted in the delineation of a new theoretical position and drew attention to India's unique national features which had remained hidden in both the nationalist (Congress) and the separatist (Muslim League) approaches. Their lasting contribution to an understanding of Indian polity lay in highlighting its hitherto neglected features. This contribution carries a greater explanatory value today than any other viewpoint in the debates concerning India's unity in regard to the onslaught of secessionist movements, on the one hand, and communalism-fascism as articulated in *Hindutva*, on the other.

Congress never asked itself if India could ever be fashioned as a 'nation' in the sense in which Germany or Italy or Sweden or Portugal became nations. In other words, what is the given specificity of the social and historical material that will allow for certain political moves and conceptual constructions and prohibit others? After all, a nation has to be fashioned out of concrete elements contained in a given social formation with its linguistic-cultural and religious peculiarities. What could have been the determinate political forms which could be expected to generate processes that would tend towards the unity of India? Congress regarded the nation as automatically indistinguishable from countrywide territory. This resulted in giving a conceptual rigidity to Congress thinking *vis-à-vis* Muslim politics under Muslim League leadership. Thus it was prevented from experimenting with categories and forms other than bourgeois-legal and political forms inherited from colonial rule. It could not even systematically explore the reasons underlying the failure of the independence movement under its leadership and retain the support of Muslim masses for a united India after the end of the *Khilafat*/non-cooperation phase.

Not only was it developing a long-term perspective on national

consolidation, but the CPI also took the stand that the most important objective at that time was to create conditions conducive to Muslim masses staying on in India. It was believed that such an end could be achieved by opening up a political space for appropriate intervention. Once the demand for Pakistan as a separate sovereign state had caught the imagination of articulate Muslims, a united India could not be forged except on the basis of a voluntary political association of the people of India. Unity could not be secured by means of a strategy of outmanoeuvring the leadership of the Muslim League. Politics centred around outmanoeuvring would imply an urge to dominate. Such a stance could hardly be relied upon to promote a sense of co-belonging between Muslims and Hindus.

Jinnah's success consisted in the creation of conditions favourable for the Muslim community acquiring a privileged identity which was denied to other religious or linguistic-cultural minorities. This somewhat distorted conviction spread among Muslims easily because they were swayed by historical memories of past power and domination and a corresponding fear of being dominated by others in the present. The psychological inverse of a sense of having dominated in the past is the chronic fear of being dominated. At the present time this is evident in the anti-Mandal hysteria of members of the privileged castes who are afraid of losing their dominant position.

As the Congress party was unable to identify a terrain for struggle, it had no weapon to combat Muslim separatism effectively. In this situation, the CPI appreciated the need to strive for a different theoretical construction of Indian society in terms of its national composition. This necessitated a critique of the two main protagonists in the struggle against colonial rule.

The CPI's intervention in the debate on Indian nationalism

Let us at this point try to separate the distinct strands that made up the CPI's position on questions relating to Indian nationalism. The three important and easily separable layers within the argument were:

1. 'Theorizing' the national specificities of which India was made up;
2. a structure of intentions which lay behind the conceptual moves made by CPI; and
3. the actual stand to be taken on the demand for Pakistan which, by then, had been turned into the politics of complete secessionism.

Let us first look at the way in which India was sought to be conceptually constructed. The new theoretical construction came about in 1942 not as an abstract necessity but because of the concrete needs of the situation created by the demand for a sovereign Pakistan and the problems that it posed for the concept of a united India. For the first time in 1942, the central committee (CC) of the Communist Party of India (CPI) noted that

[e]very section of Indian people which has a contiguous territory ... psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognized as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state ... and will have the *right to secede* ... Thus free India is a federation or union of autonomous states of various nationalities such as Pathans, Western Punjabis (predominantly Muslims), Sikhs, Sindhis, Hindustanis, Rajasthanis, Gujeralis, Bengalis, Assamese, Biharis, Oriyas, Andhra, Tamils, Karnatakis, Maharashtrians, Keralase, etc.⁴

Before this resolution was passed, there was no clear evidence to suggest that the CPI viewed the 'national question' in India in terms of the 'right to secede', even though the much more ambiguous 'right to self determination' has always been a part of its discourse on multinational India. Together with the enumeration of various nationalities, this not only constituted a departure in terms of the CPI's own earlier understanding but it also represented an effort to introduce a new set of categories and a methodology (even if only implicit) of arriving at them. To this extent it was a creative step forward, particularly when viewed against the background of the limited set of categories centred around religion which became the staple of the debates of the Congress and Muslim League alike on the question. If the Muslim League insistently harped on religion as the overriding criterion of nationhood, the response of the Congress was confined to repudiating such assertions without developing new conceptual weapons to combat national separatism inspired by religion. The Congress would not ignore religion which became the common currency of the discourse of politics in India.

The CPI tried to get around this impasse in a novel way. It advanced the view that

... a declaration of rights [in as much as it concedes to every nationality (as defined above) and therefore to *nationalities having Muslim faith*, the right of autonomous state and of secession can form the basis of unity between the National Congress and the League ...]. Such a declaration therefore concedes the just essence of Pakistan and has *nothing in*

⁴ See para 3(a) of the resolution entitled 'On Pakistan and National Unity' passed by the enlarged plenum of the CCCPI (19 Sept., 1942) and adopted by the First Congress of the CPI in May 1943 (henceforward 'Resolution'). (Emphasis supplied.)

*common with the separatist theory of dividing India into two nations on the basis of religion.*⁵

The difference, or rather the sharp contrast, between the CPI's thinking on the subject and that adopted by the Muslim League is clear. The CPI was categorical in saying that the Muslims did not constitute *a nation* and that, contrary to what Jinnah was saying, religion did not privilege them in any way. Indeed, the CPI held the view that Muslims constitute not one but a number of nationalities; alternatively, there could be a large number of nationalities in India which shared the 'Muslim faith' as one of their defining characteristics. The policy of the leadership and other more chauvinist nationalists of ostracizing the CPI for raising the Pakistan issue in this way, and then going on to appoint as the first Governor-General of the Independent India C. Rajagopalachari, the right-wing leader of Congress, who accepted Jinnah's two nation theory, was a curious irony and represented an act of political dishonesty.

In his report to the Central Committee (CC) Plenum, Adhikari made a more pointed reference to Muslims as nationalities. These references are interesting because they go well beyond what the resolution formally lays down. For example, Adhikari says:

The grievances and demands of the Muslims as *oppressed nationalities* are brought more and more into political controversies.⁶

He went on to add in the same report that the grievances of all nationalities including 'Muslim nationalities' could be resolved.

What deserves attention here was the shift in the position brought about by twisting the terms of nationalist discourse. It was not a case of a mere change of emphasis. Much more than that was involved because Adhikari had introduced new categories into his formulation, which pointed to a clear tilt in favour of the Muslim League position. In all subsequent discussions within the CPI, Adhikari's formulation was invariably cited, and to this date it has remained a source of great confusion.

A curious inconsistency is noticeable precisely at the point at which theoretical moves were being first thought out. The CC of the CPI (which is the highest decision-making body of the party) and the leaders proposing its resolutions were not speaking with one voice. The CC was trying to lay down principles as a basis for debate. But the leaders entrusted with the task of elucidating principles were engaged

⁵ Ibid., para 4. (Emphasis supplied.)

⁶ G. Adhikari's 'Report', introducing the 'Resolution' (see footnote 5) before the enlarged plenum of the CCCPI and published in 1944 as a pamphlet *Pakistan and National Unity* (with a foreword by Ben Bradley of the Communist Party of Great Britain). Henceforth referred to as 'Report'. See also Adhikari, 1942.

in efforts to extend them to untenable lengths. Principles, ostensibly enunciated for their general thrust, were presented in a manner which made it obvious that the CPI favoured a tilt towards the proposition of the Muslim League. Two parallel discourses were simultaneously fostered within the CPI until India gained independence.

Whereas the *Resolution* of the CCCPI only refers to 'nationalities having the Muslim faith', Adhikari's *Report* refers to Muslims not only as 'nationalities' (without any qualifications), but also as 'oppressed nationalities'. It does not lay down any criteria as to what constitutes an 'oppressed nationality', a procedure essential to the Leninist method of specifying reality. Nor does Adhikari distinguish between the oppression, on the one hand, of 'western Punjabis' (predominantly Muslim) or 'Muslims in eastern Bengal', and, on the other, of (say), 'Sikhs' or the Oriyas respectively.

Despite errors in the way in which the *Resolution* categorized various peoples as nationalities, its overall position on the question of Indian nationalism was guarded. However, the careless use of terms in the *Report* gave rise to much confusion. Ambiguities made it possible for interested parties to read unintended meaning into it and often to play interpretative games directed towards chauvinistic ends. The CPI's critics based their attacks on quotations from the *Report* and not the *Resolution*.

None of the approved resolutions or memoranda from the constitutionally appointed party bodies implied a construction such as the one we find in the *Report* cited above. As late as 1946, an official CPI Memorandum putting forth the party's views on self-determination had the following to say:

the acute differences between the Congress and the League on the issue of a constituent assembly can only be settled by the just application of the principle of self-determination.

We suggest that the provisional government should be charged with the task of setting up a Boundaries Commission to re-draw the boundaries on the basis of natural ancient homelands of every people, so that redemarcated provinces become, as far as possible, linguistically and culturally homogeneous national units, e.g. Sind, Pathenland, Western Punjab*. The people of each unit should have the unfettered right of self-determination, that is, the right to decide freely whether they will join the Indian union or form a separate sovereign state or another Indian union.

The asterisk after Western Punjab in the above quotation was used to enumerate the various nationalities in a footnote. It reads as follows:

The following are the national units that will come into existence after demarcation of boundaries, as suggested above, and after the dissolution of Indian States (i.e. princely States under British paramountcy);

Tamilnadu, Andhra Desha, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajastan, Sind, Baluchistan, Pathanland, Kashmir, Western Punjab, Central Punjab, Hindustan, Bihar, Assam, Bengal and Orissa. [Marxist Miscellany, 1946.]

Compared to the list drawn up in 1942, the 1946 list of nationalities contained no explicit reference to religious communities. But the separation of the Punjab into a western and central region, constituting two different nationalities, *implicitly accepted religion* as a historically important dividing line between them.

In another pamphlet written during the same period, the General-Secretary of the CPI (P.C. Joshi) drew attention to the 'Muslim nationalities' in the following way:

Right in our midst live Muslim people like the Sindhis, Baluchis, Pathans, Western Punjabis, Eastern Bengalis, and they have the necessary characteristics of nations. The Pakistan movement, under the banner of the League, is the national movement of these nationalities. Why should it be difficult for Gandhi and Congressmen to see the anti-imperialist content of their movement and hail them as fellow-fighters for freedom. [Joshi, 1946: 7.]

Joshi, like Adhikari, regarded religion as a *defining* factor in the making of nationality, even though the official documents of the CPI regarded it only as a *conditioning* feature of nationality. This difference was brought out clearly in the discussion about Bengal. Unlike Joshi, who accorded a separate status to 'Eastern Bengalis' as a 'nation' by virtue of the fact that a majority of them were Muslims, the Memorandum referred to Bengal as a nationality. However, a contradictory position on Bengal can also be found in a subsequent passage.

Bengal is more unified, both culturally, economically, than any other province in India. The Bengalis as a nationality are also perhaps the most developed. In spite of sharp differences which have existed and continue to exist between them, both Hindus and Muslims of Bengal *feel in their bones* that they are one. A United Bengal, they know, is obviously the natural solution. [Joshi, 1946: 35: emphasis supplied.]

It is difficult to make sense of such subjectivism punctuated with hyperboles such as '*feel in their bones that they are one*' (emphasis supplied). At the same time, it is difficult to square such an assertion with the earlier one that '[the]... Muslim people like ... Eastern Bengalis have the necessary characteristics of nations'. As in a cart-wheel, we are both up and down at the same time. The Joshi-Adhikari nightwalks into theoretical darkness rendered the CPI's position on the national question amorphous. Their easy-going remarks on vital issues at critical points could not be defended empirically or logically. Thus, for example, they referred to the Sikhs as:

... an important nationality in Punjab with a great historical tradition [Marxist Miscellany, 1946: 34].

Furthermore, Joshi piled one absurdity on another by advising the Sikhs

... to go into Pakistan on the basis of a Muslim-Sikh pact which guarantees that the Muslim majority state is not used against their existence, but their minority cultural rights and due and just share in administration is ensured. [Marxist Miscellany, 1946: 33.]

The formulation of distinct, parallel discourses cannot be explained away in a simplistic manner on the ground that the CPI leadership had failed to do their homework. Even though this may have been true to a certain extent, the internal inconsistency of the CPI's position could be explained only on the basis of a more fundamental, i.e. theoretical, deficiency in their understanding of the issues involved. The documents that were formally endorsed by the CPI show that the right theoretical moves were made, especially in the party's view of India as being made up of a large number of nationalities (in other words a multinational state). This simply meant that its national peculiarities placed it more or less on a par with countries such as Switzerland, the USSR, and Yugoslavia, and that the option of national unification of people (as in the cases of Italy, Sweden, and Portugal) were not available to India.

The CPI was able to initiate the right move in this sphere, even though it had not spelt out clearly a methodological basis by which the different criteria involved in the determination of what constituted nationalities should be weighed and related; or for understanding the process by which the Indian nation would be realized. Thus, for example, a high degree of similarity that could be superficially observed between the national composition of the peoples of India and those of the Soviet Union should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the different linguistic-cultural groups in India were never brought together into a single state by conquest, but came together by a gradual process of unification through a single framework of social patterns and philosophical presuppositions. The differences between the Soviet and Indian experiences in this regard were bound to affect the way the national question was tackled in each case. In the case of the CPI, however, the failure to resolve the theoretical problem gave rise to a serious lacuna in the conceptual framework which was employed to tackle the national question. It was inevitable that certain tendencies within the party should use this lacuna in order to advance their preferred interpretation.⁷ The support that the pro-Pakistan line gained within the party is attributable to the exploitation by a

⁷ This ran counter to Adhikari's stand in an earlier statement made in 1945 which spelt out in detail how the Sikh homeland could be re-demarcated in the Punjab Province as it then stood. The CPI was going to contest the election on this ground (Adhikari, 1946).

⁸ It is worth noting that there is no mention of this in Adhikari (1946).

dominant faction of the theoretical gap in the CPI's line on the national question.

The root of this error in the handling of the national question—namely, constant backsliding in the face of the separatist challenge—lay essentially in the party leadership's non-revolutionary outlook. The CPI leadership erroneously believed that the national question could be solved by using its good offices to bring together the leaders of two contending forces—namely the Congress and the Muslim League—and that a *rapprochement* between the two parties could be brought about. The CPI did not see its role as one of systematically working out a line of approach with which it could go to the people directly in order to mobilize them on a national platform. It consistently ignored the possibility of building up popular pressure aimed at compelling the Congress and the Muslim League to see the national question from a different perspective. Such a move on the CPI's part may not have averted Partition, but it might well have helped popularize an alternative (i.e. a more democratic) way of dealing with the national question—namely, all the major nationalities seeking a voluntary accord on a basis of complete equality. Instead, the CPI leadership departed from the official Resolution of the party, and argued in support of the demand of Pakistan, on the one hand, whilst pleading, on the other, with the Congress to seek an agreement with the Muslim League that would secure and safeguard the unity of India.

The CPI's attitude to the question, of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds resulted in its *immobilisme* at a crucial juncture in Indian history. The error in the CPI's thinking on the national question outlined above had far-reaching consequences. The conduct of the CPI during the period immediately preceding Partition affected all facets of its politics and its subsequent career. Thus, for example, the capitulation of a section of the communist movement to Congress politics during the '70s, leading to the Internal Emergency, provides us with some insight into this area. The problem faced by the CPI during the '40s concerned its outlook towards the nationalist movement against colonial rule. It fell prey to a grave miscalculation to the effect that, between the two, the Congress and the Muslim League represented the sum total of what was to be attained through the freedom struggle.

The leadership of the CPI believed that its role consisted of putting forward for consideration new categories and conceptual schemes about the Indian nation and national unity to the three major political actors—the Congress, the Muslim League, and the colonial authorities. Even the party cadres, let alone the common people, were left out of the process of the generation of new ideas and frameworks for the

independent nation that was to emerge after the departure of the colonial power. Such a general orientation on the part of the CPI leadership must be attributed to a fallacious conception of politics which relegated the mass of the people and popular struggles to a secondary position—as mere extensions of the leaders of the major political formations—namely the Congress and the Muslim League. The CPI leadership believed that the real struggle consisted of the battle for political supremacy between the Congress and the Muslim League.

It was against a background of the 'theoretical lacuna and the ensuing political miscalculation discussed here that the CPI capitulated to the manoeuvring of the leaderships of the Congress and the Muslim League. The literature of the CPI clearly demonstrates not only this development but also its general outlook on politics at that critical juncture.

The CPI's capitulation to the Muslim League's reading of the political situation must be viewed against a background of two distinct lines followed by it during the years leading up to Independence (Alam, 1989). During the period 1935–47, the CPI entertained a high estimation of the democratic potential of the Indian bourgeoisie which it regarded as basically *oppositional* in character (i.e. as essentially anti-imperialist and seeking a democratic transformation of Indian society). As late as April 1946, the CCCPI (P.C. Joshi, General Secretary) had noted in its resolution on political developments that

... inside the party some comrades loosely begin to talk about Congress ministries being fascist or semi-fascist. The proper characterisation of the Congress and League ministries is that they are popular ministries ... because the organisation [*sic*.] they represent are the biggest popular organisations of our country, embodying in howsoever a distorted and wrong way, the freedom urge of the vast majority of our people. In addition the Congress is committed to a broad programme of national reconstruction, however reformist it may be." [Ranadive, 1948.]

'Some comrades inside the party [talking] loosely' was an unmistakable reference to serious inner-party differences.

By August 1946, the tendency within the CPI led by P.C. Joshi, which had until then been the dominant one, started to lose its force. By the time the CCCPI met in December 1947 to review the situation, Joshi's position was further weakened. The Central Committee then adopted a statement of policy and approved a document setting out the policy of revolutionary defence against the collaborationist attitude of bourgeois leaders. By now, they had rejected the *notion of an*

⁹ Quoted in: 'Report on Reformist Deviation' presented by B.T. Ranadive at the Second Party Congress in Calcutta held in February–March 1948. This document is available in *Documents on the History of Communist Party of India*, Vol. VII, 1948–1950. Henceforth: *Documents*.

oppositional bourgeoisie in favour of a collaborationist bourgeoisie which had surrendered to imperialism. This line (known as the B.T.R. line) was duly endorsed by the second Congress of the CPI early in 1948. Whatever its sectarian errors and unrealistic dreams may have been, it did review the entire position of the CPI on the national question.

The P.C. Joshi line lost out at a moment when it was too late to reverse the tide in favour of Partition. But it is of some significance to the present argument that the clash between two views within the CPI was brought out into the open. If the viewpoint characterizing the Indian bourgeoisie as oppositional was dominant and was pushing the party more and more in the direction of placing the Congress and the Muslim League on a par with each other (and therefore continuing its intervention to providing advice and suggestions to both sides), the other point of view, which considered the same bourgeoisie as collaborationist in character, was not only not strong but was as yet not clear about its own position on the demand for Pakistan.

Underlying the guarded formulation of the official Resolutions were the differences between the two tendencies, and bargaining between them. The contradiction between the two sides could not be resolved in favour of a resolution accepting outright the formation of Pakistan. Such a lack of clarity on both sides gave the latitude to certain groups in the CPI to make the party position appear to veer towards the Muslim League in the Reports and other writings of the time. Crucial to the paralysis of the party on this question was the interpretation of Muslim nationalities as oppressed without, at any point, specifying the criteria on which it was based; the struggle of an oppressed nationality for self-determination, in terms of Lenin's formulations, would make it *ipso facto* a democratic struggle.

This explanation of the division and confusion within the CPI would account for the effort on the part of the Joshi-Adhikari group to push the tendency they represented to its logical conclusion and to commit the party as a whole to the strategy which they viewed as correct—a strategy in which the Congress and the Muslim League were viewed as being of exactly equal significance in the anti-imperialist struggle and in which the separatist pro-imperialist politics of the Muslim League were consistently underplayed. As a result the decision of the First Congress of CPI (May 1943) to build a United National Front (UNF) was thwarted. In 1942–3, the CPI had decided

1. to build a UNF by drawing together toilers of all castes, communities, and nationalities in common class organizations;
2. that in order to build a UNF it was necessary to dispel mutual distrust and suspicion; and
3. that in free India, UNF would stand for perfect equality

between nationalities and communities that live together (*see* footnote 3).

Therefore the CPI had declared in 1942–3 that

... the right of autonomous state existence can form the basis of unity between the National Congress and the League ... Such a declaration therefore concedes the just essence of Pakistan and has nothing in common with the separatist theory of dividing India into two nations on the basis of religion (*see* footnote 3).

It reiterated in 1946 that

The Communist Party stands for a free, voluntary, democratic Union of sovereign units. It is firmly convinced that the best interest of the Indian masses will be served by their remaining together in one common brotherhood to defend the freedom and solve the problems of poverty which require the co-operation of all. It is only on the basis of the application of the principle of self-determination ... that Indian unity can be preserved. [Memorandum of the CPI to the Cabinet Mission (*see* footnote 3).]

All of this, as on the earlier occasion, remained a mere declaration of intent and no more. This makes it quite clear that the *Party* as such held no brief for the demand for Pakistan even if its Resolution could be deflected into pleading for an understanding of the Muslim League's position. Therefore, the predilections of individual leaders in the communist movement such as Adhikari or Joshi enabled them to twist the Resolution around to suit their purpose. The division of India had become imminent; and the Communist Party was trying to open up the possibility of Muslims and Hindus staying on in a united India. It was important that the CPI moved on to this terrain because there was no other way of averting Partition, but it missed the opportunity because none among its leaders could apply a theoretical brake against the deflections which were all too obvious.

The discussions within the CPI, up to Independence, reflect at least in broad outline, the main contours of the political discourse on the nation (Alam, 1989). They signify positions adopted by the various contending political forces, positions from which they have not radically shifted since. Thus, the Congress(I) still continues to treat India as a single undifferentiated nation.

The political forces in Pakistan today continue to adhere to the view that history has vindicated the two-nation theory—incredible as it may seem after the break-up of the country and the emergence of movements for separation or autonomy in Sind and Baluchistan. The communists—now divided between the CPI, CPI(M), and the various CPI(M–L) factions—as a whole subscribe to the notion that India is a multinational state and does not constitute a nation in the same sense

as (say) Egypt or Bangladesh. However, there are sharp disagreements on various issues of strategy and tactics relating to the national question.

It is worth digressing in order to point out that none of the communist parties in India have so far identified the specific conditions under which the Indian social formation could evolve in one or other direction. In other words, the Indian communist movement is as yet in no position to ground its analysis of the national question in India. In the absence of theory, the various tendencies within the communist movement have consistently fallen prey to the methodological fallacy of excessive (if not exclusive) reliance on recurrent sequences of history or on past actualities. Common factors cutting across different historical periods such as, say, the bourgeoisie or the market, are non-specific in nature (i.e. the causal chains to which they give rise are not quite the same in different epochs). As a consequence, Marxist analysis often uses past *conclusions* (i.e. conclusions reached in another epoch) as premises on the basis of which deductions can be made about the present. This has led to serious theoretical infirmities, and to an *à priori* transfer of understanding.

Thus, the CPI repudiated what, at the Second Party Congress (1948) were, in its view, the 'errors' and 'excesses' in the positions taken or pronouncements made by its leaders during the 1942–7 period. Ranadive presented 'A Reformist Deviation' at that Congress which duly approved it. Whatever its sectarian errors, and there were many, the Report clearly not only showed that leaders such as Adhikari and Joshi had committed serious mistakes and indulged in gross exaggerations, but it also pointed to directions in which the official resolutions of the party were blemished. While recognizing the great contribution that the leadership had made by posing the question of self-determination as the core problem in situations of multinationality, the Ranadive Report noted that Adhikari's (1942) pamphlet

in many places contains the seeds and germs of opportunist surrender that we made in the subsequent period [Ranadive, 1948: 168].

i.e. before Independence. It further noted that this pamphlet

fails to attack the [Muslim] League leaders and their cry for Pakistan as a weapon of compromise with imperialism, separation being the special form of compromise with the imperialist government [Ranadive, 1948: 168–9].

As a result, the CPI

not only refused to fight the disruptionist role of the Muslim League and the Pakistan demand, but more and more ourselves made concessions to separatism in the name of popularising and enriching self-determination.

Thus 'self-determination was brought nearer to Pakistan' (Ranadive, 1948: 169).

The Ranadive Report levelled the same criticism, though in a more stringent form, against Joshi's article which was viewed as a complete 'retreat before the bourgeoisie' (Ranadive 1948: 177). It also castigated the entire party for its failure to comprehend the disruptive and anti-democratic idea underlying Muslim League politics.

[It] was not a technical concession to nationality on the basis of religion but was part of the appeasing policy we were following towards the League bourgeois leaders. In fact it was their demand that Muslims should have the right to form an autonomous state where they are in a majority ... In fact we tend to accept this characterisation and begin to trail behind the Muslim League in the very first resolution of ours. Following this whatever we have written, all the writings of the PB [Politbureau] members, bear this opportunist stamp and later on we carry this conception to its logical conclusion. [Ranadive, 1948: 177].

In view of the political importance of this shift in the CPI's understanding of the national question, it would be useful to focus on its historical background. In changing its orientation on this subject, the CPI was critically influenced by an article published in March 1946 (Dutt, 1946). Entitled 'India and Pakistan', Dutt's article raised two points relevant to this discussion.

First, the article put forward the view that the Muslim League was not a national movement of 'certain nationalities occupying certain parts of India'. The Muslim League was a communal organization 'organizing Muslims as Muslims in *all* parts of India' (emphasis mine), just as the '*Hindu Mahasabha organises* [emphasis mine] Hindus as Hindus'. Second, the Pakistan movement was a movement of the Muslim League for the constitution of a Muslim state with religion *not* nationality as the determining factor (Dutt, 1946: 89). Dutt elaborated this point with the remark that it would be no more appropriate to speak of 'Moslem nationalities' than to refer to Spain, Italy, France, and Austria as 'Catholic nationalities'.

Dutt's article caused a furor within the CPI and left a number of cadres and a section of the leadership angry. In order to soothe the ruffled feelings of a sizeable section of the CPI, a 12-page long inner party circular was issued (CPI, 1946).

The inner party circular was intended to serve a two-fold purpose—namely, to clarify the issue and remove confusion, and to point to the correct approach that should be adopted towards Dutt's article. It is interesting that Dutt was on a visit to India at this time and had been involved in the discussion to which his article had given rise.

For the discussion in this chapter, we shall concern ourselves with the beginnings of a reassessment of the CPI's understanding of the

national question which, until the publication of Dutt's article, was embodied in the thinking reflected in the documents of the Second Congress of the CPI (1948).

The circular noted that

[a] correct and effective fight against Muslim *chauvinist separation* of the League leadership as well as against the Hindu chauvinist denial of self-determination of the Congress leadership cannot be waged if we lose sight in our agitation of the fact that [the] Muslim League is today an expression of the freedom and anti-imperialist aspiration of the masses, even though in a *distorted* form [CPI, 1946]. [emphasis supplied.]

The key reference in the above passage, hitherto not in general use, relates to *chauvinist separatism* as an element of Muslim League politics, and to the urge for freedom and anti-imperialism among the Muslim masses which was being deflected and distorted by the Muslim League leadership.

The circular went on to point out that the 'religious separatist aspect' and the 'anti-Hindu and anti-Congress' twist which the League leadership gives 'to the mass support that it enjoys [among] the freedom loving Muslim masses' imparted a pro-British imperialist shape to the Muslim League. This constituted a thoroughgoing departure from the party's earlier characterization of Muslim League politics. It exercised a salutary impact on a number of stances adopted until then by the CPI on the question of Pakistan.

In a major departure from the CPI's habitual thinking, the circular also posed another question.

Can Sindhis, Kashmiris, Western Punjabis, and Bengalis be referred to as Muslim nationalities when a large proportion of people there have a common language, common territory and homeland as Hindus? ... 4Pathans and Baluchis may be referred to as 'Muslim nationalities' in the same sense as Stalin spoke of the Mohammedan people, referring to Turks, Persians, Afghans, etc. This nomenclature is not quite correct for others. [CPI, 1946.]

From here on, the circular went to assert positively that

... in India nationalities like Sindhis, Pathans, Bengalis, Marathas, Gujeratis, Tamils, Oriyas, Andhras, Kannadigas, etc. are growing, while, at the same time, the common bonds of the people of all these nationalities are also growing in the common struggle against imperialism for independence, freedom and democracy [CPI, 1946].

And, therefore,

[t]he talk of Muslim nationalities, as well as of a Muslim nation, splits the common front of struggle for freedom and democracy ... [CPI, 1946].

But

[t]he talk of India, 'India as a Nation', which denies self-determination to growing nationalities, especially to those which have a majority of Muslim faith, also leads to the same result by alienating the Muslims, [CPI, 1946].

Given these complexities and the contradictory character of political developments, the circular implored the cadres to see if

we should seriously consider the question whether we can at all speak of Muslim nationalities or not, whether it is at all consistent with our central slogan and policy of self-determination of nationalities, [CPI, 1946].

The circular ended with the suggestion that party activists should ponder the issues centred around the urgent questions raised in Dutt's article before the CPI could arrive at policy decisions.

The new understanding to which these exchanges gave rise within the CPI constituted a vindication of the arguments advanced by a small minority within the party which were reflected in an unpublished (and only recently discovered) document of which Kunwar Mohammed Ashraf was the author (Ashraf, n.d.).

How did the party position move from this point onwards, after India's truncated Independence? The connection between the conception of a multinational state and the right of self-determination/secession was by no means severed; neither, under the changed requirements of the political struggle, was it allowed to slip into the background without any discussion. On the question of nationalities in the Indian Union, the struggle for the creation of linguistic States was going to emerge as the key issue in the struggle for the organization of the Indian state on a democratic and voluntary basis. This was to be the first priority.

At the same time, the CPI was also trying to grapple with the problem of defining the nature of the relationship between the different nationalities of which the multinational Indian state consists. Considerable time and discussion was expended before arriving at a definite position. Nevertheless, the party still continued to espouse the principle of self-determination; as for example, in the Political Thesis adopted at the Second Congress (1948), it spoke of

[s]elf-determination to nationalities, including the right of secession. A voluntary Indian union, autonomous linguistic provinces [Rao (Ed.), 1976: 85.]

If, before Independence, the party now argued, the non-recognition of the right to self-determination brought about a 'disastrous partition of the country', a refusal to recognize the principle after Independence was

bound to lead to hostile sentiments among different nationalities of the Indian union and create the danger of exploitation of their discontent by reactionary elements [Rao (Ed.), 1976: 115].

The CPI was going to be in the forefront of the struggle for the creation of linguistic States and enshrining their rights in the Constitution.

The CPI's unequivocal stand that the formation of linguistic States constituted the minimum precondition for the 'national democratic' reorganization of the Indian state was subsequently elaborated after the Third Party Congress (Madurai, 1953). Paragraph 47 of the 'Political Resolution' devoted to the national question (albeit somewhat loosely) cursorily raised three issues: the linguistic States; the 'tribal' question, and the handling of relations between the nationalities. Out of these, the CCCPI took up the States Reorganization question for detailed consideration and set out its understanding of the Indian state from a wider perspective. This was the basis of the CPI's 'Memorandum' to the States' Reorganisation Commission (May, 1954).

The CPI's stand on the reorganization of States was substantiated by Ajay Ghosh, the General Secretary, who provided a detailed elaboration of the political 'Resolution' of the Madurai Party Congress and the CCCPI's 'Resolution' on the Reorganization of States. This still remains an important attempt to explain the CPI's stand on the nationality question because, for the first time after Independence, an exercise was carried out in which a number of specific issues were viewed in the perspective of the national question. Ghosh (1954) emphasized the following four conditions as the basis of party work on the national question in India, and these remained the basis of work until the 1964 split.

1. The first stage in the struggle for solving the 'national question' in India has to be a movement for the linguistic States *but only as a part* of the general democratic movement.

2. It was *not* to be conceived, as was the case in Tsarist Russia, as a struggle of one nationality against another, but a 'struggle for a democratic recasting of boundaries and against the relics of imperialism and feudalism'.

3. While it recognized that even in the post-independence period every major linguistic-cultural group constitutes a nationality, it explicitly stated: 'wrong is the idea that in India there are *oppressor* nations and *oppressed* nations and that the latter have to fight against the former' (emphasis supplied).¹⁰

4. It therefore followed that the tendency of separatism in all forms has to be fought.

¹⁰ This is perhaps the first explicit denial on the CPI's part of the presence of *oppressor* and *oppressed* nationalities in India. This is important because the Russian debate had been conducted by Lenin in these terms. Immediately following this assertion in the document is a discussion of how India was different from Tsarist Russia (Ghosh, 1954: 19–20).

Ajay Ghosh went on to say very clearly that

The various Indian nationalities must stay together in one State both for the defence of freedom and for rapid economic, political and social rebuilding of our country. The Communist Party stands for the unity of India and wants the people of different nationalities fighting for freedom and democracy to come closer together.

Under this new emphasis, the question of self-determination as embodying the right of secession became, to all intents and purposes, a dead letter, even though it continued to exist formally in the Party Programme (Sen (Ed.), 1977: 1–18). A contradiction which had gone practically unnoticed for a long time now crept into the thinking of the CPI.

If there were no *oppressor* nations then, from the logic of Leninist formulations on which this understanding was based, the right of secession could not be written in as an *automatic* constitutional provision. This way of defining self-determination was finally dropped by the CPI(M) after the split in 1964 [CPI(M), 1972]. Although the party programme of the CPI(M) was adopted in 1964, not much was said then on the question of nationalities. A detailed position on the question had to await the Seventh Party Congress (Madurai, 1972). The 'Note on the National Question' is important because it represents the first attempt on the CPI(M)'s part to provide a *theoretical* substantiation of its position on this issue. Taking an argued position on the issue of oppressor–oppressed nationalities, the Note referred to the right of self-determination in the following terms:

There is no compelling reason why it should be obligatory to insert this slogan in our Programme, and that, too, when we cannot postulate the division of Indian nationalities into what are called oppressor and oppressed, and when the big bourgeois–chauvinist and jingoist groups in different nationalities on the other are endangering working class unity by fostering separatist and disruptive forces, thus pushing into the forefront of the proletarian party the foremost task of fighting against these trends. [Roy, 1967.]

It may be of some interest to note that some independent Marxist scholars had already arrived at a similar position a number of years earlier (Alam, 1983). Unlike the CPI(M), the CPI has not so far undertaken a critical, theoretical exercise on the national question in India. But this does not mean that the positions they take on the various issues confronting the country are necessarily wrong; on the contrary, often, the way the CPI has positioned itself in relation to the various movements of nationalities or those of national minorities has an unquestioned democratic content. This is perhaps a good point at which to conclude this discussion. Issues such as questions of seces-

sion, autonomy of States, claims and counter-claims of nationalities under formation that dominate politics today, politics around the question of nations will require a longer analysis of a different type.

The Communist Party inherited a situation over which it had no control. The only option it thought it had, entirely wrongly it would appear, was to impress upon the Congress persistently that it should move forward to Independence by moving back on the non-negotiable position it had taken on the Muslim League demand for a sovereign Pakistan. It tried to move the debate away from bickerings on the question of religion. In doing so, the CPI believed that the Congress could avoid a political stalemate by conceding in principle the right of nationalities to secede in the event of their finding that their position in united India was unsatisfactory. Such a provision in the political arrangements of independence would be less damaging than the partition of India.

In the event, however, Partition became unavoidable. By staging an ignominious retreat from its original stance, the Congress leadership also revealed the limitations of bourgeois thought on the national question. For the communist movement, however, the central question revolved round its capacity to make the theoretical innovation needed to forge correct political practice in dealing with a complex multinational situation. That question still remains at the heart of the communist parties, ineffective response to the demands of various nationalities in contemporary India.

NOTE

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¹⁰ I have tried to look at two such situations of nationality under formation. See Javeed Alam, 'Nationality Formation under Retarded Capitalism' in Kumar David and Jantasilan Kadirgamar, *Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict and Crisis*, Arena Press, Hong Kong, 1989.

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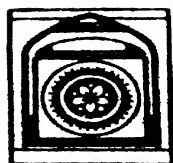
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